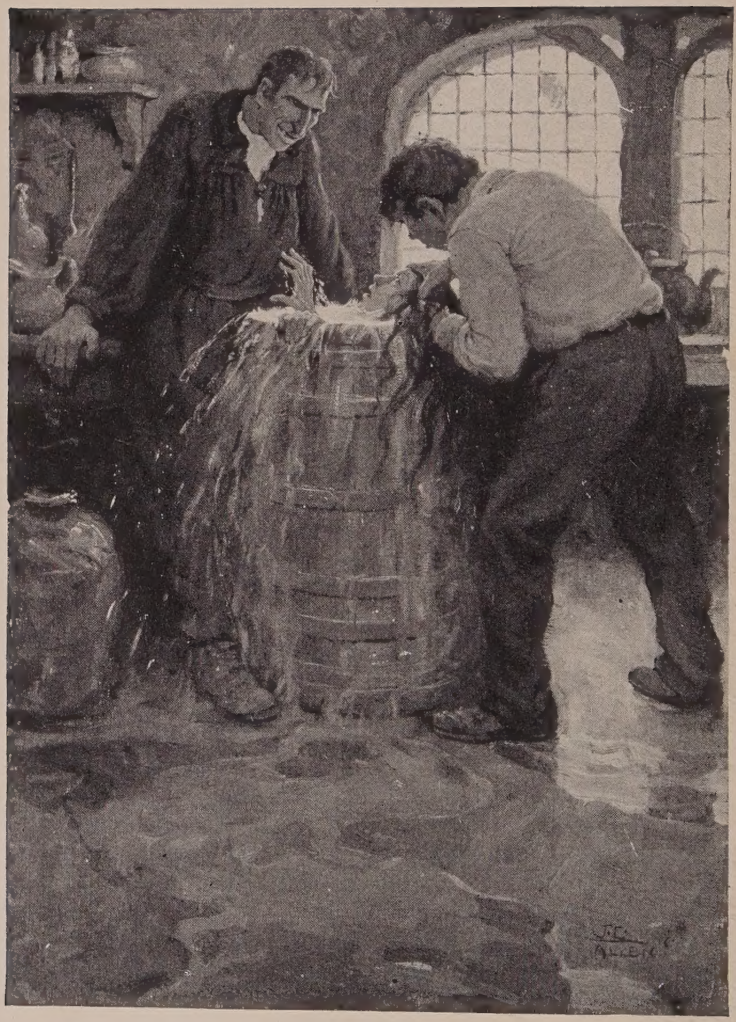

AND THEN BRUMENT PUSHED DOWN MY HEAD AS IF TO DROWN ME, SO THAT I COULD ALREADY SEE PARADISE.

Inclusive Edition

THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF
Guy de Maupassant

QUEEN HORTENSE
THE WANDERING LIFE
and other stories

Translations, Critical and Interpretative Essays by

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FRONTISPIECES BY J. E. ALLEN

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QUEEN HORTENSE

IN Argenteuil she was called Queen Hortense. No one knew why. Perhaps it was because she had a commanding tone of voice; perhaps because she was tall, bony, imperious; perhaps because she governed a kingdom of servants, chickens, dogs, cats, canaries, parrots, and all the animals so dear to an old maid's heart. But she did not spoil these familiar friends; she had for them none of those endearing names nor of the foolish tenderness which women seem to lavish on the soft fur of a purring cat. She governed these beasts with authority; she reigned.

She was indeed an old maid—one of those old maids with a harsh voice and angular motions, whose very soul seems to be hard. She never would stand contradiction, impudence, hesitation, indifference, laziness, nor fatigue. She had never been heard to complain, to regret anything, to envy anyone. She would say: "Everyone has his share,"

with the conviction of a fatalist. She did not go to church, she had no use for priests, she hardly believed in God, calling all religious things " weeper's wares."

For thirty years she had lived in her little house, with its tiny garden running along the street; she had never changed her habits, only changing her servants pitilessly, as soon as they reached twenty-one years of age.

When her dogs, cats and birds would die of old age or from an accident, she would replace them without tears and without regret; with a little spade, she would bury the dead animal in a strip of ground, throwing a few shovelfuls of earth over it and stamping it down with her feet, in an indifferent manner.

She had a few friends in town, families of clerks who went to Paris every day. Once in a while she would be invited out, in the evening, for tea. She would inevitably fall asleep, and she would have to be awakened when it was time for her to go home. She never allowed anyone to accompany her, fearing neither light nor darkness. She did not appear to like children.

She kept herself busy doing countless male tasks —carpentering, gardening, sawing or chopping wood, even laying bricks when it was necessary.

She had relatives who came to see her twice a year, the Cimmes and the Colombels, her two sisters having married, one of them a florist and the other a retired merchant. The Cimmes had no children; the Colombels had three: Henri, Pauline, and Joseph. Henri was twenty, Pauline seventeen, and Joseph only three.

There was no love lost between the old maid and her relatives.

In the spring of the year 1882, Queen Hortense suddenly fell sick. The neighbors called in a physician, whom she immediately drove out. A priest then having presented himself, she jumped out of bed, half naked, to throw him out of the house.

The young servant, in despair, was brewing her some tea.

After lying in bed for three days, the situation appeared so serious that the barrel-maker, who lived on the right side of her, on advice from the doctor, who had forcibly returned to the house, took it upon himself to call together the two families.

They arrived by the same train, towards ten in the morning, the Colombels bringing little Joseph with them.

When they got to the garden gate, they saw the servant, seated in the chair against the wall, crying.

The dog was sleeping on the door mat in the broiling sun; two cats, which looked as though they might be dead, were stretched out in front of two windows, their eyes closed, their paws and tails spread out at full length.

A big, clucking hen was parading through the garden with a whole regiment of yellow, downy chicks; and a big cage hanging from the wall, covered with pimpernel, contained a kingdom of birds; which were chirping away in the warmth of this beautiful spring morning.

In another cage, shaped like a châlet, two inseparable partners were perched, motionless, side by side on their little swing.

M. Cimme, a fat, puffing person, who always entered first everywhere, pushing everyone else aside, whether man or woman, when it was necessary, asked:

"Well, Céleste, aren't things going well?"

The little servant moaned through her tears:

"She doesn't even recognize me any more. The doctor says it's the end."

Everybody looked around.

Madame Cimme and Madame Colombel then embraced each other, without saying a word. They looked very much alike, having always worn their hair drawn tight over their scalps and loud red cashmere shawls.

Cimme turned to his brother-in-law, a pale, sallow-complexioned, thin man, wasted by stomach complaints and who limped badly, and said in a serious tone of voice:

"Gad! It was high time."

But no one dared to enter the dying woman's room on the ground floor. Even Cimme made way for the others. Colombel was the first to make up his mind, and, swaying from side to side like the mast of a ship, the iron ferrule of his cane resounding against the floor, he entered.

The two women were the next to venture, and M. Cimme closed the procession

Little Joseph had remained outside, pleased at the sight of the dog.

A ray of sunlight seemed to cut the bed in two, shining just on the hands, which were moving nervously, continually opening and closing. The fingers were twitching as though moved by some thought, as though trying to point out a meaning or idea, as

though obeying the dictates of a will. The rest of the body lay motionless under the sheets. The angular frame showed not a single movement. The eyes remained closed.

The family spread out in a semi-circle and, without a word, they began to watch the contracted chest and the short, gasping breathing. The little servant had followed them and was still crying.

At last, Cimme asked:

" Exactly what did the doctor say? "

The girl stammered:

" He said to leave her alone, that nothing more could be done for her."

But suddenly the old woman's lips began to move. She seemed to be uttering silent words, words hidden in the head of this dying being, and her hands quickened their peculiar movements.

Then she began to speak in a thin, high voice, which no one had ever heard, a voice which seemed to come from the distance, perhaps from the depths of this heart which had always been closed.

Cimme, finding this scene painful, was walking around on tiptoe. Colombel, whose crippled leg was growing tired, sat down.

The two women remained standing.

Queen Hortense was now babbling away, and no one could understand a word. She was pronouncing names, many names, calling imaginary people.

" Come here, Philippe, kiss your mother. Tell me, child, do you love your mamma? You, Rose, take care of your little sister while I am away. And don't leave her alone. Don't play with matches! "

She stopped for a while, then, in a louder voice, as though she were calling someone: " Henriette! " then waited a moment, and continued:

" Tell your father that I wish to speak to him before he goes to business." And suddenly: " I am not feeling very well to-day, darling; promise not to come home late. Tell your employer that I am sick. You know, it isn't safe to leave the children alone when I am in bed. For dinner I will fix you up a nice dish of rice. The little ones like that very much. Won't Claire be happy! "

And she broke out in a happy, joyous laugh, such as they had never heard: " Look, Jean, how funny he looks! He has smeared jam all over his face, the little pig! Look, sweetheart, look, isn't he funny? "

Colombel, who was continually lifting his tired leg from place to place, muttered:

" She is dreaming that she has children and a husband; it is the beginning of the death agony."

The two sisters had not yet moved, surprised, astounded.

The little maid exclaimed:

" You must take off your shawls and your hats! Would you like to go into the parlor? "

They went out without having said a word. And Colombel followed them, limping, once more leaving the dying woman alone.

When they were relieved of their traveling garments, the women finally sat down. Then one of the cats left its window, stretched, jumped into the room, up on Madame Cimme's knees, who began to pet it.

In the next room could be heard the voice of the dying woman, living, in this last hour, the life for which she had doubtless hoped, living her dreams themselves, when all was over for her.

Cimme, in the garden, was playing with little Joseph and the dog, enjoying himself in the whole-

hearted manner of a man from the fields, having completely forgotten the dying woman.

But suddenly he entered the house, and, speaking to the girl:

"I say, my girl, are we not going to have luncheon? What do you ladies wish to eat?"

They finally agreed on an omelet, a piece of steak with new potatoes, cheese and coffee.

As Madame Colombel was fumbling in her pocket for her purse, Cimme stopped her, and, turning to the maid: "Have you got any money?"

She answered:

"Yes, Monsieur."

"How much?"

"Fifteen francs."

"That's enough. Hasten, my girl, because I am beginning to get very hungry."

Madame Cimme, looking over the climbing vines bathed in sunlight, and at the two turtle-doves on the roof opposite, said in an annoyed tone of voice:

"What a pity to have had to come for such a sad occasion. It is so nice in the country to-day."

Her sister sighed without answering, and Colombel mumbled, moved perhaps by the walk ahead of him:

"My leg certainly is bothering me to-day."

Little Joseph and the dog were making a terrible noise; one was shrieking with pleasure, the other was barking wildly. They were playing hide-and-seek around the three flower beds, running after each other like mad.

The dying woman continued to call her children, talking with each one, imagining that she was dressing them, fondling them, teaching them how to read: "Come on! Simon, repeat: A, B, C, D. You are

not paying attention, listen—D, D, D; do you hear me? Now repeat——"

Cimme exclaimed: "Funny what people say when in that condition."

Madame Colombel then asked:

"Wouldn't it be better if we were to return to her?"

But Cimme dissuaded her from the idea:

"What's the use? You can't change anything! We are just as comfortable here."

Nobody insisted. Madame Cimme observed the green birds, called inseparable. In a few words she praised this singular faithfulness, and blamed the men for not imitating these animals. Cimme began to laugh, looked at his wife and began to hum in a bantering way: "Tra-la-la, tra-la-la," as though to cast a good deal of doubt on his own, Cimme's, faithfulness.

Colombel was suffering from cramps, and was rapping the floor with his cane.

The other cat, its tail pointing upright to the sky, now came in.

They sat down to luncheon at one o'clock.

As soon as he had tasted the wine, Colombel, for whom only the best of Bordeaux had been prescribed, called the servant back:

"I say, my girl, is this the best stuff that you have in the cellar?"

"No, Monsieur; there is some better wine, which was only brought out when you came."

"Well, bring us three bottles of it!"

They tasted the wine and found it excellent, not because it was of a remarkable vintage, but because it had been in the cellar fifteen years. Cimme declared:

" That is regular invalid's wine! "

Colombel, filled with an ardent desire to gain possession of this Bordeaux, once more questioned the girl:

" How much of it is left? "

" Oh! Almost all, Monsieur; Mamz'elle never touched it. It's in the bottom stack."

Then he turned to his brother-in-law:

" If you wish, Cimme, I would be willing to exchange something else for this wine; it suits my stomach marvelously."

The chicken had now appeared with its regiment of young ones; the two women were enjoying themselves throwing crumbs to them.

Joseph and the dog, who had eaten enough, were sent back to the garden.

Queen Hortense was still talking, but in a low, hushed voice, so that the words could no longer be distinguished.

When they had finished their coffee, all went in to observe the condition of the sick woman. She seemed calm.

They went outside again and seated themselves in a circle in the garden, in order to complete their digestion.

Suddenly the dog, who was carrying something in his mouth, began to run around the chairs at full speed. The child was chasing him wildly. Both disappeared into the house.

Cimme fell asleep, his well-rounded stomach bathed in the glow of the shining sun.

The dying woman once more began to talk in a loud voice. Then suddenly she shrieked.

The two women and Colombel rushed in to see what was the matter. Cimme, awakened, did not

budge, because he did not wish to witness such a scene.

She was sitting up, with haggard eyes. Her dog, in order to escape being pursued by little Joseph, had jumped up on the bed, run over the sick woman, an entrenched behind the pillow, was looking down at his playmate with snapping eyes, ready to jump down and begin the game again. He was holding in his mouth one of his mistress's slippers, which he had torn to pieces, and with which he had been playing for the last hour.

The child, frightened by this woman who had suddenly risen in front of him, stood motionless before the bed.

The hen had also come in, and frightened by the noise, had jumped up on a chair; and was wildly calling her chicks, who were chirping, bewildered, around the four legs of the chair.

Queen Hortense was shrieking:

"No, no, I don't want to die, I don't want to! I don't want to! Who will bring up my children? Who will take care of them? Who will love them? No, I don't want to!—I don't——"

She fell back. All was over.

The dog, wild with excitement, jumped around the room, barking.

Colombel ran to the window, calling his brother-in-law:

"Hurry up, hurry up! I think that she has just gone."

Then Cimme, resigned, arose and entered the room, mumbling:

"It didn't take as long as I thought it would!"

DIVORCE

MAITRE BONTRAN, a celebrated Parisian lawyer, who for the last ten years had been pleading and obtaining all the separations between ill-assorted couples, opened the door of his office and stepped aside to allow the new client to enter.

He was a large, red-faced, vigorous-looking man with blonde side whiskers. He bowed.

"Please be seated," said the lawyer.

The client sat down and cleared his throat:

"I come to retain your services, Monsieur, in a divorce case."

"I am listening."

"Monsieur, I am a former notary."

"So early!"

"Yes, so early. I am thirty-seven years old."

"Please continue."

"Monsieur, I have made an unfortunate marriage, a very unfortunate one."

"You are not the only one."

"I know it, and I pity the other ones; but my case is quite out of the ordinary and my grievances against my wife are rather peculiar. But I will begin at the beginning. I got married in a rather strange manner. Do you believe in peculiar ideas?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Do you believe that certain ideas are as dangerous for some minds as poison is for the body?"

"Yes, perhaps."

"Certainly. There are ideas which get into our minds, which eat our hearts and kill us or make us go crazy if we do not know how to resist them. It is a sort of parasite living on our minds. If we are unfortunate enough to allow one of these ideas to slip into our minds, if we do not notice at the very beginning that it is an intruder and tyrant, that it extends itself, hour by hour, day by day, that it continually returns, drives away our other preoccupations, absorbs our attention and changes our point of view, if we do not observe these facts, then we are lost.

"Well, this is what happened to me, Monsieur. As I have already said, I was a notary at Rouen, not poor, but forced to observe a strict economy and to limit all my tastes! And that is hard at my age.

"As notary, I read with great care the advertisements on the last pages of the papers, the personals, etc., and in that manner I often arranged rather advantageous marriages for my clients.

"One day my attention was attracted to this:

"'Pretty, well-educated, respectable young lady

would marry an honorable man and bring him two million five hundred thousand francs clear. Nothing accepted from agencies.'

"I happened to be dining that day with two friends, one a lawyer and the other a mill-owner. Somehow or other, the conversation turned to marriages, and I told them, laughing, about the young lady with the two million five hundred thousand francs.

"The mill-owner said: 'What kind of women are they, as a rule?'

"The lawyer, who had several times seen happy marriages arise from these conditions, gave him details; then he added, turning to me:

"'Why do you not look into that yourself? Two and a half million would relieve you of many of your cares.'

"The three of us laughed, and then we talked of other things.

"An hour later I went home.

"It was cold that night. I lived in one of those old-fashioned country houses. On putting my hand on the iron bannister an icy shiver ran through me, and as I stretched out the other hand to find the

wall I felt another damper chill course down my back. The two seemed to meet in my chest and fill my heart with sadness and pain. And, seized by a sudden memory:

"'Jove! If I only had those two and a half millions.'

"My room was gloomy; it was a bachelor's room, taken care of by a servant who was also supposed to do the cooking. Can you imagine what that room looked like? A large bed, no curtains, a closet, a bureau, a wash-stand, and no fire. Clothes were thrown on the chairs and papers littered the floor. I began to hum a tune which I had heard in a concert hall, for I sometimes go to those places:

> "'Two million, two million looks good to me,
> With another half million any woman is fine.'

"I had not yet thought of the woman, and my mind only turned to her as I slipped into bed, but then I thought of her so much that I had difficulty getting asleep.

"The following day, as I opened my eyes, before daylight, I remembered that I had to be at Darmetal before eight o'clock for some important business. Therefore I had to get up at six o'clock, and it was freezing. By Jove! two million five hundred thousand!

"Toward ten o'clock I got back to my office. There was the smell of a rusty stove, of old papers, of shoes, of clothes, of everything, heated up to eighty degrees.

"I lunched, as usual, on a burnt chop and a piece of cheese. Then I got to work.

"It was then that I started for the first time to think seriously of the lady with the two million five

hundred thousand. Who was she? Why not write? Why not find out?

" Well, Monsieur, to make a long story short, this idea haunted me, tortured me for two weeks. All my cares, all my little troubles, which I had always borne without noticing them up to now, pricked me like needles, and each one of these little griefs made me think immediately of the lady with the two million five hundred thousand.

" I imagined her whole history. When one wishes for something, Monsieur, one imagines it as one would like to have it.

" Certainly, it was not natural for a young girl of good family and with such a dowry to be looking for a husband by advertisements. However, she might be very honorable and unfortunate.

" First of all, this fortune of two million five hundred thousand francs had not dazzled me as something fairy-like. We notaries are accustomed to reading all the offers of this nature and to seeing proposals for marriage accompanied by six, eight, ten, or even twelve millions. Twelve million is rather common; it seems to please. I know that we scarcely ever place any faith in the realization of such promises. Nevertheless, they accustom our mind to these fantastical figures, and make us consider a dowry of two million five hundred thousand francs as very possible and very moral.

" Therefore a young girl, the natural child of a *parvenu* and of a chambermaid, having suddenly inherited from her father, had learned at the same time the shame of her birth, and, in order that she might not have to disclose it to some man who might have loved her, she was making use of this well-known, much-used method of obtaining a life partner.

" My supposition was foolish. Nevertheless, I held on to it. We notaries ought never to read novels; and I have read many of them, Monsieur.

" Therefore I wrote to her as notary in the name of a client, and I waited.

" Five days later, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, I was working in my study when the head clerk came in and announced:

" ' Mademoiselle Chantefrise.'

" ' Show her in.'

" A woman of about thirty years of age, a little heavy, dark and with an embarrassed appearance, entered.

" ' Please be seated, Mademoiselle.'

" She sat down and murmured:

" ' It is I, Monsieur.'

" ' But, Mademoiselle, I have not the honor of knowing you.'

" ' I am the person to whom you wrote.'

" ' About a marriage? '

" ' Yes, Monsieur.'

" ' Ah! very well.'

" ' I came myself, because I think it is the best plan to conduct business personally.'

" ' You are right, Mademoiselle. We say—you wish to get married? '

" ' Yes, sir.'

" ' Have you any family? '

" She hesitated, dropped her eyes and stammered:

" ' No, sir. My father—and mother—are dead.'

" I started. I had guessed correctly, and a lively sympathy arose suddenly in my heart for this poor creature. I dropped the subject in order not to wound her, and I continued:

" ' Is your fortune clear? '

" She answered this time without hesitating:

" ' Oh! yes, sir.'

" I looked at her carefully, and really she did not displease me, although she was a little ripe, a little riper than I expected. She was a commanding, stately woman. The idea came to me to play a little comedy for her benefit, to fall in love with her and to supplant my imaginary client when I had ascertained that the dowry was not an illusion. I spoke to her of this client and depicted him as a sad, very honorable, but somewhat sickly man.

" She said quickly: ' Oh, Monsieur, I like healthy people.'

" ' You shall see him first, Mademoiselle, but not for three or four days, as he left yesterday for England.'

" ' Oh! what a bother,' she said.

" ' Yes and no. Are you in a hurry to return home? '

" ' Not at all.'

" ' Then stay here. I will try to amuse you.'

" ' That is very kind of you, Monsieur.'

" ' Are you stopping at a hotel? '

" ' She mentioned the best hotel in Rouen.

" ' Well, Mademoiselle, will you allow your future—lawyer to offer you a dinner this evening? '

" She hesitated, a little uneasy and undecided; then she made up her mind:

" ' Yes, Monsieur.'

" ' I shall come for you at seven o'clock.'

" ' Yes, Monsieur.'

" ' Good afternoon, Mademoiselle.'

" ' Good afternoon, Monsieur.'

" I saw her to the door.

" At seven o'clock I was at her place. She had dressed up for my sake and received me in a very charming manner.

" I took her to dinner in a restaurant where I was known, and the order that I gave was somewhat disquieting for my purse.

" An hour later we were great friends, and she was telling me the history of her life. The daughter of a great lady who had been wronged by a nobleman, she had been brought up on a farm. She was rich at present, having inherited large sums from both her father and her mother, whose names she would never, never tell. It would be useless to ask or to beg her to tell them, she never would. As I cared little about that, I questioned her about her fortune. She immediately started to talk in a practical manner, sure of her figures and titles, sure of her income, interests and investments. Her competence in this matter immediately gave me great confidence in her, and I became complimentary, although with reserve; but I showed her nevertheless that she pleased me.

" She became sentimental, although gracefully. I offered her some champagne and drank some myself, which made my ideas a little hazy. I then felt clearly that I was going to become bolder, and I was afraid, afraid of myself and of her, for fear that she, being also a little moved, might yield to me. In order to calm myself, I began once more to talk about the dowry, telling her that she would have to establish it exactly, as my client was a business man.

" She answered gaily: ' Oh! all right! I have brought all the proofs with me.'

" ' Here, to Rouen? '

" ' Yes, to Rouen.'

" ' Have you them at the hotel? '

" 'Yes.'

" ' Can you show them to me? '

" ' Of course.'

" ' This evening? '

" ' Certainly.'

" This saved me in every way. I paid the bill, and we started for her place.

" She had indeed brought all the titles. There could no longer be any doubt; I was holding them, feeling them, reading them. This made me so happy that I was immediately seized by an overwhelming desire to kiss her. I did, once, twice, many times—so that, the champagne helping, I, or rather she, weakened—and yielded.

" Ah, Monsieur, you should have seen me afterward—and her! She was weeping like a fountain, begging me not to betray and abandon her. I promised anything that she wished, and I left her in a terrible state of mind.

" What was I to do? I had abused her confidence. That would have been nothing if I had had a client for her, but I had none. I was the simple, deceived client, betrayed by himself. What a predicament! True, I could drop her. But what about the dowry? And then, did I have the right to drop the poor girl after having surprised her? But what suspicions I should have later on!

" How little security I should have with a woman who yielded thus easily! I spent a restless night, tortured by remorse, fears and scruples. But in the morning my mind cleared. I dressed with care and presented myself at eleven o'clock at the hotel where she was staying.

" On seeing me, she blushed to the ears.

" I said to her:

" ' Mademoiselle, I see only one way for me to repair our fault. I ask you for your hand.'

" She stammered:

" ' I give it to you.'

" ' I married her.

" All went well for six months.

" I had given up my office and was living on my income, and really my wife was absolutely without reproach.

" Nevertheless, I noticed that from time to time she would stay out for several hours.

" This happened on regular days, one week on a Tuesday, another week on a Friday. I thought that she was deceiving me, and followed her.

" It was a Tuesday. She walked out at about one o'clock, walked down the Rue de la République, turned to the right through the street which follows the archepiscopal palace, took the Rue Grand-Pont down to the Seine, then she followed the quay to the Pierre bridge and crossed the river. From this moment on, she seemed uneasy, stopping often and watching all the passers-by.

" As I had disguised myself as a coal-heaver, she did not recognize me.

" Finally, she went into the railroad station. I no longer had any doubts, her lover would arrive by the one forty-five train.

" I hid behind a truck and waited. A whistle blew—a stream of passengers rushed out—she sprang forward, snatched up in her arms a little three-year-old girl who was accompanied by a peasant woman and kissed her passionately. Then she turned around, perceived another, younger child, carried by another peasant woman, and rushed to-

ward it, snatching it in her arms and hugging it. She left, escorted by the two children and the two nurses, and went toward the long, somber and deserted walk of the Cours-la-Reine.

" I went home dazed, distressed in mind, understanding and not understanding, not daring to guess.

" When she returned for dinner I rushed toward her, shrieking:

" ' What are those children? '

" ' What children? '

" ' Those whom you were awaiting at the train from Saint Sever? '

" She screamed and fainted. When she came to she confessed to me in a flood of tears that she had four of them. Yes, sir, two for Tuesdays—two girls —and two boys for Fridays.

" And that was—oh, what shame—that was the origin of her fortune. The four fathers! . . . She had amassed her dowry.

" Now, Monsieur, what do you advise me to do? "

The lawyer answered solemnly:

" Recognize your children, Monsieur."

MOIRON

AS we were still talking about Pranzini, M. Maloureau, who had been Attorney General under the Empire, said: "Oh! I formerly knew a very curious affair, curious for several reasons, as you will see.

"I was at that time Imperial Attorney in one of the provinces. I had to take up the case which has remained famous under the name of the Moiron case.

"Monsieur Moiron, who was a teacher in the North of France, enjoyed an excellent reputation throughout the whole country. He was a person of intelligence, quiet, very religious, a little taciturn; he had married in the District of Boislinot, where he exercised his profession. He had had three children, and each one of them had died from lung disease. From this time he seemed to bestow upon the youngsters confided to his care all the tenderness of his heart. With his own money he bought

toys for his best scholars and for the good boys; he gave them little dinners and stuffed them with delicacies, sweet things and cakes. Everybody loved this good man with such a big heart, when suddenly, in a strange manner, five of his pupils died, one after the other. People looked for an epidemic in the water resulting from the drought; they looked for the causes without being able to discover them, the more so that the symptoms were so strange. The children seemed to be attacked by a languishing sickness; they would no longer eat, they complained of pains in their stomachs, dragged along for a short time, and died in frightful suffering.

" A post-mortem examination was held over the last one, but nothing was found. The vitals were sent to Paris and analyzed, and they revealed the presence of no toxic substance.

" For a year nothing new developed; then two little boys, the best scholars in the class, Moiron's favorites, died within four days of each other. An examination of the bodies was again ordered, and in both of them were discovered tiny fragments of crushed glass. The conclusion arrived at was that the two youngsters must imprudently have eaten from some carelessly cleaned receptacle. A glass broken over a pail of milk could have produced this frightful accident, and the affair would have been pushed no further if Moiron's servant had not been taken sick at this time. The physician who was called in noticed the same symptoms he had seen in the children. He questioned her and obtained the admission that she had stolen and eaten some confections that had been bought by the teacher for his scholars.

" On an order from the court the schoolhouse

was searched, and a closet was found which was full of toys and dainties destined for the children. Almost all these delicacies contained bits of crushed glass or pieces of broken needles!

"Moiron was immediately arrested; but he seemed so astonished and indignant at the suspicion hanging over him that he was almost released. However, indications of his guilt kept appearing, and I struggled in my mind with my first conviction, based on his excellent reputation, on his whole life, on the complete absence of any motives for such a crime.

"Why should this good, simple, religious man have killed children, and the very children whom he seemed to love the most, whom he spoiled and stuffed with sweet things, for whom he spent half his salary in buying toys and bonbons?

"One must believe him insane in order to think him guilty of this act. Now, Moiron seemed so normal, so quiet, so full of reason and common sense that it seemed impossible he should be touched by madness.

"However, the proofs kept growing! In none of the sweets that were bought at the places where the schoolmaster secured his provisions could the slightest fragment of anything suspicious be found.

"He then pretended that an unknown enemy must have opened his cupboard with a false key in order to introduce the glass and the needles into the eatables. And he imagined the whole story of an inheritance depending upon the death of a child, looked for by some peasant, and obtained thus, by casting suspicions on the schoolmaster. This brute, he claimed, did not care about the other children who were thus forced to die.

" The story was possible. The man appeared to be so sure of himself and in such despair that we should undoubtedly have acquitted him, notwithstanding the charges against him, if two crushing discoveries had not been made, one after the other.

" The first one was a snuffbox full of crushed glass; his own snuffbox, hidden in the desk where he kept his money!

" He explained this new find in an acceptable manner, as the ruse of the real unknown criminal. But a mercer from Saint-Marlof came to the presiding judge and said that a gentleman had several times come to his store to buy some needles; and he always asked for the thinnest needles he could find, and would break them to see whether they pleased him. The man was brought forward in the presence of a dozen or more persons, and immediately recognized Moiron. The inquest revealed that the schoolmaster had indeed gone into Saint-Marlof on the days mentioned by the tradesman.

" I will pass over the terrible testimony of children on the choice of dainties and the care which he took to have them eat the things before him, and to do away with the slightest trace.

" Public opinion became exasperated, and demanded capital punishment, and it became more and more insistent.

" Moiron was condemned to death, and his appeal was rejected. Nothing was left for him but the imperial pardon. I knew through my father that the Emperor would not grant it.

" One morning, as I was walking in my study, the visit of the prison almoner was announced. He was an old priest who knew men well and understood the habits of criminals. He seemed troubled,

ill at ease, nervous. After talking for a few minutes about one thing and another, he arose and said suddenly: 'If Moiron is executed, Monsieur, you will have killed an innocent man.'

"Then he left without bowing, leaving behind him a deep impression with his words. He had pronounced them in such a sincere and solemn manner, opening, in order to save a life, these lips closed and sealed by the secret of confession.

"An hour later I left for Paris, and my father immediately asked that I be granted an audience with the Emperor.

"The following day I was received. His Majesty was working in a little study when we were introduced. I exposed the whole affair, and I was just telling about the priest's visit when a door opened behind the sovereign's chair and the Empress, who thought him alone, appeared. His Majesty, Napoleon, consulted her. As soon as she had heard the matter, she exclaimed: 'Since this man is innocent, he must be pardoned.'

"Why did this sudden conviction of a religious woman cast a terrible doubt in my mind?

"Until then I had ardently desired a change of sentence. And now I suddenly felt myself the toy, the dupe of a cunning criminal who had employed the priest and confession as a last means of defense.

"I explained my hesitancy to their Majesties. The Emperor remained undecided, urged on one side by his natural kindness, and held back on the other by the fear of being deceived by a criminal; but the Empress, who was convinced that the priest had obeyed a divine inspiration, kept repeating: 'Never mind! It is better to spare a criminal than to kill an innocent man!' Her advice was taken.

The death sentence was commuted to one of hard labor.

"A few years later I heard that Moiron had again been called to the Emperor's attention on account of his exemplary conduct in the prison at Toulon, and was now employed as a servant by the director of the penitentiary.

"For a long time I heard nothing more of this man.

"But about two years ago, while I was spending a summer near Lille with my cousin, De Larielle. I was informed one evening, just as we were sitting down to dinner, that a young priest wished to speak to me.

"I had him shown in and he begged me to come to a dying man who desired absolutely to see me. This had often happened to me in my long career as a magistrate, and, although set aside by the Republic, I was still often called upon in similar circumstances. I, therefore, followed the priest, who led me to a miserable little room in a large tenement house.

"There I found a strange-looking man reclining on a bed of straw, with his back to the wall, in order better to breathe. He was a sort of skeleton, with dark, gleaming eyes.

"As soon as he saw me, he murmured: 'Don't you recognize me?'

"'No.'

"'I am Moiron.'

"I felt a shiver run through me, and I asked: 'The schoolmaster?'

"'Yes.'

"'How do you happen to be here?'

"'That story is too long, I haven't time to tell

it. . . . I was going to die . . . and that priest was brought to me . . . and as I knew that you were here I sent for you. . . . It is to you that I wish to confess . . . since you were the one who saved my life . . . formerly.'

"His hands contracted over the straw of his bed; and he continued in a hoarse, energetic, and low voice: 'You see . . . I owe you the truth . . . I owe it to you . . . for it must be told to some one before I leave this earth.

"'It is I who killed the children . . . all of them . . . I did it . . . for revenge!

"'Listen. I was an honest, straightforward, pure man . . . adoring God . . . this good Father . . . this Master who teaches us to love, and not the false God, the executioner, the robber, the murderer who governs the earth. I had never done any harm, I had never committed an evil act. I was as good as it is possible to be, Monsieur.

"'I married and had children, and I loved them as no father or mother ever loved their children. I lived only for them. I was wild about them. All three of them died! Why? why? What had I done? I felt revolted, furious; and suddenly my eyes were opened as if I were waking up out of a sleep; I understood that God is bad. Why had He killed my children? I opened my eyes and saw that He loves to kill. He loves only that, Monsieur. He gives life but to destroy it! God, Monsieur, is a murderer! He needs death every day. And He makes it in every variety, in order better to be amused. He has invented sickness and accidents in order to give Him diversion over the winter months and through the years; and when He grows tired of this, He has epidemics, the pest, cholera, diphtheria,

smallpox, everything possible! But this does not satisfy Him; all these things are too similar; and so from time to time He has wars, in order to see two hundred thousand soldiers killed at once, crushed in blood and in the mud, gutted, their arms and legs torn off, their heads smashed by bullets, like eggs falling on the pavement.

" ' But this is not all. He has made men who eat each other. And then, as men become better than He, He has made beasts, in order to see men hunt them, kill, and eat them. That is not all. He has made tiny little animals which live one day, flies who die by the millions in one hour, ants which we are continually crushing under our feet, and so many, many others that we cannot even imagine. And all these things are continually killing each other and dying. And the good Lord looks on and is amused, for He sees everything, the big ones as well as the little ones, those who are in the drops of water and those in the other firmaments. He watches them and is amused. Wretch!

" ' Then, Monsieur, I began to kill children. I played a trick on Him. He did not get those, it was I who did. Not he, but I! And I would have killed many others, but you caught me. There!

" ' I was to be executed. I! How He would have laughed! Then I asked for a priest, and I lied. I confessed. I lied and I lived.

" ' Now, all is over. I can no longer escape from Him. I no longer fear Him, Monsieur, I despise Him too much.'

" This poor wretch was frightful to see as he lay there gasping, opening an enormous mouth in order to let out words which could scarcely be heard, choking and spitting, picking at his bed and kicking

around under a filthy sheet as though trying to escape.

"Oh! Even the memory of it is frightful!

"I asked him: 'You have nothing more to say?'

"'No, Monsieur.'

"'Then, farewell.'

"'Farewell, Monsieur, till some day . . .'

"I turned to the ashen-faced priest, whose dark outline stood out against the wall, and asked: 'Are you going to stay here, Monsieur l'Abbé?'

"'Yes.'

"Then the dying man cackled: 'Yes, yes, he sends the vultures to the corpses.'

"I had had enough of this; I opened the door and ran away."

MADAME PARISSE

I

I WAS sitting on the pier of the small port of Obernon, near the village of Salis, looking at Antibes, bathed in the setting sun. I had never before seen anything so surprising and so beautiful.

The small town, inclosed by its heavy, protective walls, built by Monsieur de Vauban, reached out into the open sea, in the middle of the immense Gulf of Nice. The great waves, coming in from the ocean, broke at its feet, surrounding it with a wreath of foam; and beyond the ramparts the houses were climbing up the hill, one over the other, as far as the two towers which rose up into the sky, like the horns of an ancient helmet. And these two towers were outlined against the milky whiteness of the Alps, that enormous distant wall of snow which closed in the entire horizon.

Between the white foam at the foot of the walls and the white snow on the sky-line the little city, resting brilliant against the bluish background of the nearest mountain ranges, presented to the rays of the setting sun a pyramid of red-roofed houses, whose façades were also white, but so different one from another that they seemed of all tints.

And the sky above the Alps was itself of a blue that was almost white, as if the snow had tinted it; some silvery clouds were floating just over the pale summits, and on the other side of the Gulf of Nice, down by the water, unrolled like a white thread between the sea and the mountain. Two great sails, driven by a strong breeze, seemed to skim over the waves. I looked upon all this, astounded.

This view was one of those things so sweet, so rare, so delightful, that penetrate into you, and are unforgettable, like the memories of a joy. One sees, thinks, suffers, is moved, and loves with the eyes. He who can feel with the eye experiences the same keen, exquisite, and deep pleasure in looking upon men and things as the man with the delicate and sensitive ear, whose soul music overwhelms.

I turned to my companion, M. Martini, a pure-blooded Southerner.

"This is certainly one of the rarest sights which it has been vouchsafed to me to admire.

"I have seen the Mont Saint-Michel, this monstrous granite jewel, rise out of the sand at sunrise.

"I have seen, in the Sahara, Lake Raianechergui, fifty kilometers long, shining under a moon as brilliant as our sun and breathing up to it a white cloud, like a mist of milk.

"I have seen, in the Liparian Islands, the fan-

tastic sulphur crater of the Volcanello, a giant flower which fumes and burns, an over-big yellow flower, opening full on the sea, whose stem is a volcano.

"But I have seen nothing more surprising than Antibes, standing against the Alps at the setting sun.

"And I know not how it is that memories of antiquity haunt me; verses of Homer come into my mind; this is a city of the ancient East, a city out of the Odyssey; this is Troy, although Troy was very far from the sea."

M. Martini drew the Sarty guide-book out of his pocket and read: "This city was originally a colony founded by the Phocians of Marseilles, about 340 B. C. They gave it the Greek name of Antipolis, meaning counter-city, city opposite another, because it is in fact opposite to Nice, another colony from Marseilles.

"After the Gauls were conquered, the Romans turned Antibes into a municipal city, its inhabitants receiving the rights of Roman citizenship.

"We know by an epigram of Martial that at his time——"

I interrupted him:

"I don't care what she was. I tell you that I see down there a city out of the Odyssey. The coast of Asia and the coast of Europe resemble each other in their shores, and there is no city on the other coast of the Mediterranean which awakens in me the memories of the heroic times as this one does."

A footstep caused me to turn my head; a woman, a large, dark woman, was walking along the road which skirts the sea in going to the cape.

"That is Madame Parisse, you know," muttered Monsieur Martini, dwelling on the final syllable.

No, I did not know, but that name, pronounced nonchalantly, that name of the Trojan shepherd, confirmed me in my dream.

Yet I asked: "Who is this Madame Parisse?"

He seemed astonished that I did not know the story.

I assured him that I did not know it, and I looked after the woman, who passed by without seeing us, dreaming, walking with steady and slow step, as doubtless the ladies of old walked.

She was perhaps thirty-five years old, and still very beautiful, though a trifle stout.

And Monsieur Martini told me the following story:

II

Mademoiselle Combelombe was married, one year before the war of 1870, to Monsieur Parisse, a government official. She was then a handsome young girl, as slender and lively as she has now become stout and sad.

Unwillingly she had accepted Monsieur Parisse, one of those little fat men with short legs, who trip along, with trousers always too large.

After the war Antibes was occupied by a single battalion commanded by Monsieur Jean de Carmelin, a young officer decorated during the war, and who had just received his four stripes.

As he found life exceedingly tedious in this fortress, this stuffy mole-hole inclosed by the enormous double walls, he often strolled out to the cape, a kind of park or pine wood whipped by all the winds from the sea.

There he met Madame Parisse, who also came out in the summer evenings to get the fresh air under the trees. How did they love each other? Who knows? They met, they looked at each other, and when out of sight they doubtless thought of each other. The image of the young woman with the brown eyes, the black hair, the pale skin, this fresh, handsome Southerner, who displayed her teeth in smiling, was floating before the eyes of the officer as he continued with his promenade, biting his cigar instead of smoking; and the image of the commanding officer, in his close-fitting coat, covered with gold, and his red trousers, with a little blond mustache, would pass in the evening before the eyes of Madame Parisse, when her husband, half shaven and ill-clad, short-legged and big-bellied, came home to supper.

Meeting so often, they perhaps smiled at the next meeting; then, seeing each other again and again, they thought that they knew each other. He certainly bowed to her. And she, surprised, bowed in return, but very, very slightly, just enough not to appear impolite. But after two weeks she returned his salutation away off, even before they were side by side.

He spoke to her. Of what? Doubtless of the setting sun. They admired it together, looking for it in each other's eyes more often than on the horizon. And every evening for two weeks this was the commonplace and persistent pretext for a few minutes' chat.

Then they hazarded a few steps together, talking of anything that came along, but their eyes were already saying to each other a thousand more intimate things, those secret, charming things that

are reflected in the gentle emotion of the eye, and that cause the heart to beat, for they are a better confession of the soul than the spoken word.

And then he would take her hand, murmuring those words which the woman divines, without seeming to hear them.

And it was agreed between them that they would love each other without making proof of it by anything sensual or brutal.

She would have remained indefinitely at this stage of intimacy, but he wanted more. And every day he urged her more hotly to give in to his violent desire.

She resisted, she did not want it, she seemed determined not to give way.

Yet one evening she said to him, casually: "My husband has just gone to Marseilles. He will be away four days."

Jean de Carmelin threw himself at her feet, imploring her to open her door to him that very night at eleven o'clock. But she would not listen to him, and went home with angry mien.

The commander was in bad humor all the evening, and the next morning at dawn he went out on the ramparts in a rage, from one exercise field to the other, dealing out punishments to the officers and men as one might fling stones into a crowd.

On coming back for his breakfast, he found an envelope under his napkin with these four words: "To-night at ten." And he gave one hundred sous off-hand to the waiter serving him.

The day seemed endless to him. He passed part of it in curling his hair and perfuming himself.

As he was sitting down to the dinner-table, an-

other envelope was handed to him, and in it he found the following telegram:

"My Love: Business done. I return this evening on the nine o'clock train. Parisse."

The commander let loose such a big oath that the waiter dropped the soup-tureen on the floor.

What should he do? He certainly wanted her, that very evening, at whatever cost; and he would have her. He would resort to any means, even to arresting and imprisoning the husband. Then a mad thought struck him. Calling for paper, he wrote the following note:

"Madame: He will not come back this evening, I swear it to you, and I shall be where you know at ten o'clock. Fear nothing. I will answer for everything, on my honor as officer. Jean de Carmelin."

And having sent off this letter, he calmly dined.

Toward eight o'clock he sent for Captain Gribois, the second in command, and he said, rolling between his fingers the crumpled telegram of Monsieur Parisse:

"Captain, I have just received a telegram of a very singular nature, which it is impossible for me to communicate to you. You will immediately have all the gates of the city closed and guarded, so that no one, mind me, no one, will either enter or leave before six in the morning. You will also have men patrol the streets, who will compel the inhabitants to retire to their houses at nine o'clock. And one found outside beyond that time will be conducted to his home *manu militari*. If your men meet me this night they will at once go out of my way, appearing not to know me. You understand me?"

"Yes, Commander."

"I hold you responsible for the execution of my orders, my dear Captain."

"Yes, Commander."

"Would you like to have a glass of chartreuse?"

"With great pleasure, Commander."

They clinked glasses, drank down the brown liquor, and Captain Gribois left the room.

III

The train from Marseilles arrived at the station at nine o'clock sharp, left two passengers on the platform, and went on toward Nice.

One of them, tall and thin, was Monsieur Saribe, the oil merchant, and the other, short and fat, was Monsieur Parisse.

Together they set out, with their valises, to reach the city, one kilometer distant.

But on arriving at the gate of the port the guards crossed their bayonets, commanding them to retire.

Frightened, surprised, cowed with astonishment, they retired to deliberate; then, after having taken counsel one with the other, they came back cautiously to parley, giving their names.

But the soldiers evidently had strict orders, for they threatened to shoot; and the two scared travelers ran off, throwing away their valises, which impeded their flight.

Making the tour of the ramparts, they presented themselves at the gate on the route to Cannes. This likewise was closed and guarded by a menacing sentinel. Messrs. Saribe and Parisse, like

the prudent men they were, desisted from their efforts, and went back to the station for shelter, since it was not safe to be near the fortification after sundown.

The station agent, surprised and somnolent, permitted them to stay till morning in the waiting-room.

And they sat there side by side, in the dark, on the green velvet sofa, too scared to think of sleeping.

It was a long and weary night for them.

At half-past six in the morning they were informed that the gates were open, and that people could now enter Antibes.

They set out for the city, but they failed to find their abandoned valises on the road.

When they passed through the gates of the city, still somewhat anxious, the Commandant de Carmelin, with sly glance and mustache turned up, came himself to look over and examine them.

Then he bowed to them politely, excusing himself for having caused them a bad night. But he had to carry out orders.

The people of Antibes were scared to death. Some spoke of a surprise planned by the Italians; others, of the landing of the Prince Imperial; and others, again, believed that there was an Orléanist conspiracy. The truth was suspected only later, when it became known that the battalion of the Commandant had been sent very far away, and that Monsieur de Carmelin had been severely punished.

IV

Monsieur Martini had finished his story. Madame Parisse returned, her promenade being terminated. She passed gravely near me, with her eyes fixed on the Alps, whose summits now gleamed rosy in the last rays of the setting sun.

I felt like saluting her, this poor, sad woman, who would ever be thinking of that night of love, now far distant, and of the bold man who for the sake of a kiss from her had dared to put a city into a state of siege and to compromise his whole future.

And to-day he had probably forgotten her, if he did not relate this audacious, comical, and tender farce to his comrades over the cups.

Had she seen him again? Did she still love him? And I thought: Here is an instance of modern love, grotesque and yet heroic. The Homer to sing of this new Helena and the adventure of her Menelaus must be gifted with the soul of Paul de Kock. And yet the hero of this deserted woman was brave, daring, handsome, strong, like Achilles, and more cunning than Ulysses.

THE PENGUINS' ROCK

THIS is the season for penguins.

From April to the end of May, before the Parisian visitors arrive, one sees, all at once, on the little beach at Etretat, several old men, booted and belted in shooting costume. They spend four or five days at the Hôtel Hanville, disappear, and return again three weeks later. Then, after a fresh sojourn, they go away altogether.

One sees them again the following spring.

These are the last gull hunters, what remain of the old set. There were about twenty enthusiasts thirty or forty years ago; now there are only a few of those enthusiastic sportsmen.

The penguin is a very rare bird of passage, with peculiar habits. It lives the greater part of the

year in the latitude of Newfoundland and the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. But in the breeding season a flock of emigrants cross the ocean and come every year to the same spot to lay their eggs, to the Penguins' Rock, near Etretat. They are found nowhere else, only there. They have always come there, have always been chased away, but return again, and will always return. As soon as the young birds are grown they all fly away and disappear for a year.

Why do they not go elsewhere? Why not choose some other spot on the long, white, unending cliff that extends from the Pas-de-Calais to Havre? What force, what invincible instinct, what custom of centuries impels these birds to come back to this place? What first migration, what tempest, possibly, once cast their ancestors on this rock? And why do the children, the grandchildren, all the descendants of the first parents, always return here?

There are not many of them, a hundred at most, as if one single family, maintaining the tradition, made this annual pilgrimage.

And each spring, as soon as the little wandering tribe has taken up its abode on the rock, the same sportsmen also reappear in the village. One knew them formerly when they were young; now they are old, but constant to the regular appointment which they have kept for thirty or forty years. They would not miss it for anything in the world.

It was an April evening in one of the later years. Three of the old sportsmen had arrived; one was missing—Monsieur d'Arnelles.

He had written to no one, given no account of

himself. But he was not dead, like so many of the rest; they would have heard of it. At length, tired of waiting for him, the other three sat down to table. Dinner was almost over, when a carriage drove into the yard of the hotel, and the late comer presently entered the dining-room.

He sat down, in a good humor, rubbing his hands, and ate with zest. When one of his comrades remarked, with surprise, at his being in a frock-coat, he replied quietly:

"Yes, I had no time to change my clothes."

They retired, on leaving the table, for they had to set out before daybreak in order to take the birds unawares.

There is nothing so pretty as this sport, this early morning expedition.

At three o'clock in the morning the sailors awoke the sportsmen by throwing sand against the windows. They were ready in a few minutes, and went down to the beach. Although it was still dark, the stars had paled a little. The sea ground the shingles on the beach. There was such a fresh breeze that it made one shiver slightly in spite of one's heavy clothing.

Presently two boats were pushed down the beach by the sailors with a sound as of tearing cloth, and were floated on the nearest waves. The brown sail was hoisted, swelled a little, fluttered, hesitated, swelled out again as round as a paunch, and carried the boats toward the large, arched entrance that could be faintly distinguished in the darkness.

The sky became clearer, the shadows seemed to melt away. The coast still seemed veiled, the great white coast, perpendicular as a wall.

They passed through the Manne-Porte, an enor-

mous arch beneath which a ship could sail; they doubled the promontory of La Courtine, passed the little valley of Antifer and the cape of the same name, and suddenly caught sight of a beach on which some hundreds of seagulls were perched.

That was the Seagulls' Rock. It was just a little protuberance of the cliff, and on the narrow ledges of rock the birds' heads might be seen watching the boats.

They remained there, motionless, not venturing to fly off as yet. Some of them perched on the edges seated upright looked almost like bottles, for their little legs are so short that when they walk they glide along as if they were on rollers. When they start to fly they cannot make a spring, and let themselves fall like stones almost down to the very men who are watching them.

They know their limitation and the danger to which it subjects them, and cannot make up their minds to fly away.

But the boatmen begin to shout, beating the sides of the boat with the wooden boat pins, and the birds, in affright, fly, one by one, into space until they reach the level of the waves. Then, moving their wings rapidly, they scud, scud along until they reach the open sea, if a shower of lead does not knock them into the water.

For an hour the firing is kept up, obliging them to give up, one after another. Sometimes the mother birds will not leave their nests, and are riddled with shot, causing drops of blood to spurt out on the white cliff, and the animal dies without having deserted her eggs.

The first day Monsieur d'Arnelles fired at the birds with his habitual zeal; but when the party re-

turned, toward ten o'clock, beneath a brilliant sun, which cast great triangles of light on the white cliffs along the coast, he appeared worried and absent-minded, contrary to his accustomed manner.

As soon as they got on shore a kind of servant dressed in black came up to him and said something in a low tone. He seemed to reflect, hesitate, and then replied:

"No; to-morrow."

The following day they set out again. This time Monsieur d'Arnelles frequently missed his aim, although the birds were close by. His friends teased him, asked him if he were in love, if some secret sorrow was troubling his mind and heart. At length he confessed:

"Yes, indeed. I have to leave soon, and that annoys me."

"What! you must leave? And why?"

"Oh, I have some business that calls me back. I cannot stay any longer."

They then talked of other matters.

As soon as breakfast was over the valet in black reappeared. Monsieur d'Arnelles ordered his carriage, and the man was leaving the room when the three sportsmen interfered, insisting, begging, and praying their friend to stay. One of them at last said:

"Come, now, this cannot be a matter of such importance, for you have already waited two days."

Monsieur d'Arnelles, altogether perplexed, began to think, evidently baffled, divided between pleasure and duty, unhappy and disturbed.

After reflecting for some time he stammered:

"The fact is—the fact is—I am not alone here. I have my son-in-law."

There were exclamations and shouts of:

"Your son-in-law! Where is he?"

He suddenly appeared confused, and his face grew red.

"What! Do you not know? Why—why—he is in the coach house. He is dead."

They were all silent, in amazement.

Monsieur d'Arnelles continued, more and more disturbed:

"I had the misfortune to lose him, and as I was taking the body to my house, in Briseville, I came round this way so as not to miss our appointment. But you can see that I cannot wait any longer."

Then one of the sportsmen, bolder than the rest, said:

"Well, but—since he is dead—it seems to me—that he can wait a day longer."

The others chimed in:

"That cannot be denied."

Monsieur d'Arnelles appeared to be relieved of a great weight; but a little uneasy, nevertheless, he asked:

"But frankly—do you think——"

The three others, as one man, replied:

"*Parbleu!* my dear boy, two days more or less can make no difference, in his present condition."

And, perfectly calmly, the father-in-law turned to the undertaker's assistant and said:

"Well, then, my friend, it will be the day after to-morrow."

THE LEGEND OF MONT SAINT-MICHEL

HAD first seen this fairy-like castle in the sea from Cancale. It had looked to me like a confused mass, like a gray shadow rising in the foggy sky. I saw it again from Avranche at sunset. The immense stretch of sand was red, the horizon was red, the whole boundless bay was red; alone, the castle, growing out there in the distance like a fantastic manor, like a dream palace, strange and beautiful—this alone remained almost black in the brilliancy of the dying day.

The following morning at dawn I went toward it across the sands. My eyes fastened on this gigantic jewel, as big as a mountain, cut like a cameo, and as dainty as lace. The nearer I approached the greater my admiration grew, for nothing in the world could be more wonderful or more perfect.

As surprised as if I had discovered the habitation of a god, I wandered through those halls supported by frail or massive columns, raising my eyes

in wonder to those spires which looked like rockets starting for the sky, and to that incredible crowd of towers, of gargoyles, of slender and charming ornaments, a regular fireworks of stone, granite lace, a masterpiece of colossal and delicate architecture.

As I was looking up in ecstasy, a Lower Normandy peasant came up to me and told me the story of the great quarrel between Saint Michel and the Devil.

A skeptical genius has said: "God made man as his image; man has returned the compliment."

This saying is an eternal truth, and it would be very curious to write the history of the local divinity on every continent, as well as the history of the patron saints in each one of the provinces. The negro has his ferocious man-eating idols; the polygamous Mahometan fills his paradise with women; the Greeks, like a practical people, have deified all the passions.

Every village in France is under the influence of some protecting saint, modeled according to the characteristics of the inhabitants.

Saint Michel watches over Lower Normandy. Saint Michel, the radiant and victorious angel, the sword-carrier, the hero of Heaven, the victorious, the conqueror of Satan.

But this is how the Lower Normandy peasant, cunning, underhanded, and tricky, understands and tells of the struggle between the great Saint and the Devil.

To escape from the malice of his neighbor the Demon, Saint Michel built himself, in the open ocean, this habitation worthy of an archangel; and only such a saint could build a residence of such magnificence.

But, as he still feared the approaches of the Wicked One, he surrounded his domains by quicksands, more treacherous even than water.

The Devil lived in a humble cottage on the hill; but he owned all the salt marshes, the rich lands where grow the finest crops, the wooded valleys, and all the fertile hills of the country; but the Saint ruled only over the sands. Therefore Satan was rich, whereas Saint Michel was as poor as a church mouse.

After a few years of fasting the Saint grew tired of this state of affairs, and began to think of some compromise with the Devil; but the matter was by no means easy, as Satan kept a good hold on his crops.

He thought the thing over for about six months; then one morning he set out for land. The Demon was eating his soup in front of his door when he saw the Saint; he immediately rushed toward him, kissed the hem of his sleeve, invited him in, and offered him refreshments.

Saint Michel drank a bowl of milk and then began: "I have come here to propose to you a good bargain."

The Devil, candid and trustful, answered: "Very well."

"Here it is. Give me all your lands."

Satan, growing alarmed, wished to speak: "But——"

The Saint continued: "Listen first. Give me all your lands. I will take care of all the work, the plowing, the sowing, the fertilizing, everything, and we will share the crops equally. How does that suit you?"

The Devil, who was naturally lazy, accepted. He

only asked in addition for a few of those delicious *surmullets* which can be caught around the solitary mountain. Saint Michel promised the fish.

They shook hands and spat to show that it was a bargain, and the Saint continued: "Here, so that you will have nothing to complain of, choose that part of the crops which you prefer: that which will be above ground, or in the ground. Satan cried out: "I choose all that will be above ground."

"It's a bargain!" said the Saint. And he went away.

Six months later, all over the immense domain of the Devil, one could see nothing but carrots, turnips, onions, salsify, all the plants whose juicy roots are good and savory, and whose useless leaves are good for nothing but for feeding animals.

Satan wished to break the contract, calling Saint Michel a swindler.

But the Saint, who had developed quite a taste for agriculture, went back to see the Devil, and said: "Really, I hadn't thought of that at all; it was just an accident, no fault of mine. And to make things fair with you, this year I'll let you take everything that is under the ground."

"Very well," answered Satan.

The following spring, all the Evil Spirit's lands were covered with golden wheat, oats as big as beans, linseed, magnificent colzas, red clover, peas, cabbage, artichokes, everything that blossoms into grains or fruit in the sunlight.

Once more Satan received nothing, and this time he completely lost his temper. He took back his fields and remained deaf to all the new propositions of his neighbor.

A whole year rolled by. From the top of his

lonely manor, Saint Michel looked at the distant and fertile lands, and watched the Devil direct the work, take in his crops, and thresh the wheat. And he grew angry, exasperated at his powerlessness. As he was no longer able to deceive Satan, he decided to reap vengeance on him, and he went out to invite him to dinner for the following Monday.

"You have been very unfortunate in your dealings with me," he said; "I know it; but I don't want any ill feeling between us, and I expect you to dine with me. I'll give you some good things to eat."

Satan, who was as greedy as he was lazy, accepted eagerly. On the day which had been decided on, he donned his finest clothes and set out for the castle.

Saint Michel sat him down to a magnificent meal. First there was a *vol-au-vent,* full of cocks' crests and kidneys, with meat-balls, then two big *surmullets* with cream sauce, a turkey stuffed with chestnuts soaked in wine, some salt-marsh lamb as tender as possible, vegetables which melted in the mouth, and nice warm cake which was brought on smoking and spreading a delicious odor of butter.

They drank hard and sparkling cider, and red wine both flat and sparkling, and after each course more room was made with some old apple brandy.

The Devil drank and ate to his heart's content; in fact, he took so much that he found himself inconvenienced.

Then Saint Michel arose in anger, and cried, in a voice like thunder: "What! before me, rascal! you dare—before me——"

Satan, terrified, ran away, and the Saint, seizing a stick, pursued him. They ran around through

the halls, turning around the pillars, running up the staircases, galloping along the cornices, jumping from gargoyle to gargoyle. The poor Demon, who was woefully ill, was running about madly and soiling the Saint's home. At last he found himself at the top of the last terrace, from which could be seen the immense bay, with its distant cities, sands, and passages. He could no longer escape, and the Saint came up behind him and gave him a furious kick, which shot him through space like a cannon-ball.

He shot through the air like a javelin and fell heavily before the town of Mortain. His horns and claws stuck deep into the rock, which keeps through eternity the traces of this fall of Satan's.

He stood up again, limping, crippled until the end of time, and as he looked at this fatal castle in the distance, standing out against the setting sun, he understood well that he would always be vanquished in this unequal struggle; and he went away limping, heading for distant countries, leaving to his enemy his fields, his hills, his valleys, and his marshes.

And this is how Saint Michel, the patron saint of Normandy, vanquished the Devil.

Another people would have dreamed of this battle in an entirely different manner.

MARTINE

IT came to him one Sunday after mass. He was walking home from church, along the hollow road that led to his house, when he saw ahead of him Martine, who was also going home.

Her father walked beside his daughter with the important gait of a wealthy farmer. Discarding the smock, he wore a short coat of gray cloth and on his head a round-topped hat with wide brim.

She, laced up in a corset which she wore only once a week, walked along erect, with her squeezed-in waist, her broad shoulders, and prominent hips, swinging herself a little. She wore a hat trimmed with flowers, made by a milliner at Yvetot, and displayed the back of her full, round, supple neck, reddened by the sun and air, on which fluttered little stray locks of hair.

Benoist saw only her back; but he knew well the face he loved, without, however, having ever noticed it more closely than he did now.

Suddenly he said: "*Nom d'un nom,* she is a fine girl, all the same, that Martine." He watched her as she walked, admiring her hastily, feeling a desire taking possession of him. He did not long to see her face again, no. He kept gazing at her figure, repeating to himself: "*Nom d'un nom,* she is a fine girl."

Martine turned to the right, to enter "La Martinière," the farm of her father, Jean Martin; and she cast a glance behind her as she turned round. She saw Benoist, who looked to her very comical. She called out: "Good morning, Benoist." He replied: "Good morning, Martine; good morning, Maît' Martin," and went on his way.

When he reached home the soup was on the table. He sat down opposite his mother beside the farm-hand and the hired man, while the maid-servant went to draw some cider.

He ate a few spoonsful, then pushed away his plate. His mother said:

"Don't you feel well?"

"No, I feel as if I had some pap in my stomach, and that takes away my appetite."

He watched the others eating as he cut himself a piece of bread from time to time and carried it lazily to his mouth, masticating it slowly. He thought of Martine. "She is a fine girl, all the same." And to think that he had not noticed it before, and that it came to him, just like that, all at once, and with such force that he could hardly eat.

He did not touch the stew. His mother said:

"Come, Benoist, try and eat a little; it is loin of mutton; it will do you good. When one has no appetite, he should force himself to eat."

He swallowed a few morsels, then, pushing away his plate, said:

"No. I can't go that, positively."

When they rose from table he walked round the farm, telling the farm-hand he might go home, and that he would drive up the animals as he passed them.

The country was deserted as it was the day of rest. Here and there, in a field of clover, cows were moving along heavily, with full bellies, chewing their cud under a blazing sun. Unharnessed plows were standing at the end of a furrow, and the upturned earth ready for the seed showed broad, brown patches amid yellow patches of stubble of wheat and oats that had lately been harvested.

A rather dry autumn wind blew across the plain, promising a cool evening after the sun had set. Benoist sat down on a ditch, placed his hat on his knees as if he needed to cool off his head, and said aloud in the stillness of the country: "If you want a fine girl, she is a fine girl."

He thought of it again at night, in his bed, and in the morning when he awoke.

He was not sad, he was not discontented, he could not have told what ailed him. It was something that had hold of him, something fastened in his mind, an idea that would not leave him and that produced a sort of tickling sensation in his heart.

Sometimes a big fly is shut up in a room. You hear it flying about, buzzing, and the noise haunts you, irritates you. Suddenly it stops; you forget it; but all at once it begins again, obliging you to look up. You cannot catch it, nor drive it away,

nor kill it, nor make it keep still. As soon as it settles for a second it instantly starts off buzzing again.

The recollection of Martine disturbed Benoist's mind like an imprisoned fly.

Then he longed to see her again, and walked past the Martinière several times. He saw her, at last, hanging out some clothes on a line stretched between two apple trees.

It was a warm day. She had on only a short skirt and her chemise, showing the curves of her figure as she hung up the towels. He remained there concealed by the hedge for more than an hour, even after she had left. He returned home more obsessed with her image than ever.

For a month his mind was full of her, he trembled when her name was mentioned in his presence. He could not eat, he had night sweats that kept him from sleeping.

On Sunday, at mass, he never took his eyes off her. She noticed it, and smiled at him, flattered at his appreciation.

One evening he suddenly met her in the road. She stopped short when she saw him coming. Then he walked right up to her, choking with fear and emotion, but determined to speak to her. He began falteringly:

"See here, Martine, this cannot go on like this any longer."

She replied, as if she wanted to tease him:

"What cannot go on any longer, Benoist?"

"My thinking of you as many hours as there are in the day," he answered.

She put her hands on her hips.

"I do not oblige you to do so."

"Yes, it is you," he stammered; "I cannot sleep, nor rest, nor eat, nor anything."

"What do you need to cure you of all that?" she asked.

He stood there in dismay, his arms swinging, his eyes staring, his mouth agape.

She hit him a punch in the stomach, and ran off.

From that day they met each other along the roadside, in byroads, or else at twilight on the edge of a field, when he was going home with his horses and she was driving her cows home to the stable.

He felt himself carried, cast toward her by a strong impulse of his heart and body. He would have liked to squeeze her, strangle her, eat her, make her part of himself. And he trembled with impotence, impatience, rage, to think she did not belong to him entirely, as if they were one being.

People gossiped about it in the countryside. They said they were engaged. He had, however, asked her if she would be his wife, and she had answered: "Yes."

They were waiting for an opportunity to talk to their parents about it.

But all at once she stopped coming to meet him at the usual hour. He did not even see her as he wandered round the farm. He could only catch a glimpse of her at mass on Sunday. And one Sunday, after the sermon, the priest actually published the banns of marriage between Victoire-Adelaide Martin and Josephin-Isidore Vallin.

Benoist felt a sensation in his hands as if the blood had been drained off. He had a buzzing in the ears, and could hear nothing; and presently he perceived that his tears were falling on his prayer book.

For a month he stayed in his room. Then he went back to his work.

But he was not cured, and it was always in his mind. He avoided the roads that led past her home, so that he might not even see the trees in the yard, and this obliged him to make a great circuit morning and evening.

She was now married to Vallin, the richest farmer in the district. Benoist and he did not speak now, though they had been comrades from childhood.

One evening, as Benoist was passing the town hall, he heard that she was *enceinte*. Instead of experiencing a feeling of sorrow, he experienced, on the contrary, a feeling of relief. It was over now, all over. They were more separated by that than by her marriage. He really preferred that it should be so.

Months passed, and more months. He caught sight of her occasionally going to the village with a heavier step than usual. She blushed as she saw him, lowered her head, and quickened her pace. And he turned out of his way so as not to pass her and meet her glance.

He dreaded the thought that he might one morning meet her face to face and be obliged to speak to her. What could he say to her now after all he had said formerly when he held her hands as he kissed her hair beside her cheeks? He often thought of those meetings along the roadside. She had acted falsely after all her promises.

By degrees his grief diminished, leaving only sadness behind. And one day he took the old road that led past the farm where she now lived. He looked at the roof from a distance. It was there, in there, that she lived, with another! The apple

trees were in bloom, the cocks crowed on the dunghill. The whole dwelling seemed empty, the farmhands had gone to the fields to their spring toil. He stopped near the gate and looked into the yard. The dog was asleep outside his kennel. Three calves were walking slowly, one behind the other, toward the pond. A big turkey was strutting before the door, parading before the turkey hens like a singer at the opera.

Benoist leaned against the gatepost and was suddenly seized with a desire to weep. But suddenly he heard a cry, a loud cry for help, coming from the house. He was struck with dismay, his hands grasping the wooden bars of the gate, and listened attentively. Another cry, a prolonged, heartrending cry, reached his ears, his soul, his flesh. It was she who was crying like that! He darted inside, crossed the grass patch, pushed open the door, and saw her lying on the floor, her body drawn up, her face livid, her eyes haggard, in the throes of childbirth.

He stood there, trembling and paler than she was, and stammered:

"Here I am, here I am, Martine!"

She replied in gasps:

"Oh, do not leave me, do not leave me, Benoist!"

He looked at her, not knowing what to say, what to do. She began to cry out again:

"Oh! oh! it is killing me. Oh, Benoist!"

She writhed frightfully.

Benoist was suddenly seized with a frantic longing to help her, to quiet her, to remove her pain. He leaned over, lifted her up, and laid her on her bed; and while she kept on moaning he began to

take off her clothes, her jacket, her skirt, and her petticoat. She bit her fists to keep from crying out. Then he did as he was accustomed to doing for cows, ewes, and mares; he assisted in delivering her, and found in his hands a large infant, who was moaning.

He wiped it off and wrapped it up in a towel that was drying in front of the fire, and laid it on a bundle of clothes ready for ironing that was on the table. Then he went back to the mother.

He took her up and placed her on the floor again, then he changed the bedclothes and put her back into bed. She faltered:

"Thank you, Benoist; you have a noble heart." And then she wept a little, as if she felt regretful.

He did not love her any more, not the least bit. It was all over. Why? How? He could not have said. What had happened had cured him better than ten years of absence.

She asked, exhausted and trembling:

"What is it?"

He replied calmly:

"It is a very fine girl."

Then they were silent again. At the end of a few seconds the mother, in a weak voice, said:

"Show her to me, Benoist."

He took up the little one and was showing it to her as if he were holding the consecrated wafer, when the door opened and Isidore Vallin appeared.

He did not understand at first; then, all at once, he guessed.

Benoist, in consternation, stammered out:

"I was passing, I was just passing by when I heard her crying out, and I came—there is your child, Vallin!"

Then the husband, his eyes full of tears, stepped forward, took the little mite of humanity that he held out to him, kissed it, unable to speak from emotion for a few seconds; then, placing the child on the bed, he held out both hands to Benoist, saying:

"Your hand upon it, Benoist. From now on we understand each other. If you are willing, we will be a pair of friends, a pair of friends!"

And Benoist replied:

"Indeed I will; certainly; indeed, I will."

THE FATHERS

I HAVE a friend, Jean de Valnoix, whom I visit from time to time. He lives in a little cottage in the woods at the edge of a river. He retired from Paris after leading a wild life for fifteen years. Suddenly he had enough of pleasures, dinners, men, women, cards, everything; and he came to live in this little place where he had been born.

There are two or three of us who go, from time to time, to spend a few weeks with him. He is certainly delighted to see us when we arrive, and pleased to be alone again when we finally take our leave.

I went to see him last week, and he received me with open arms. We would spend hours at a time, sometimes together, sometimes alone. Usually he reads and I work during the daytime, and every evening we talk until midnight.

Well, last Tuesday, after a scorching day, toward

nine o'clock in the evening we were both of us sitting and watching the water flow at our feet; we were exchanging very vague ideas about the stars which were bathing in the current and which seemed to swim along ahead of us. Our ideas were very vague, confused, and brief, for our minds are very limited, weak, and powerless. I was expatiating on the sun that dies in the Great Bear. One can only see it on very clear nights, it is so pale. When the sky is the least bit clouded it disappears. We were thinking of the creatures which people these worlds, of their possible forms, of their unthinkable faculties and unknown organs, of the animals and plants of every kind, of all the things which man's dreams can barely touch.

Suddenly a voice called from the distance: "Monsieur, Monsieur!"

Jean answered: "Here I am, Baptiste!"

When the servant had found us he announced: "It's Monsieur's gypsy."

My friend burst out laughing, a thing which he rarely did, then he asked: "Is to-day the nineteenth of July?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Very well. Tell her to wait for me. Give her some supper. I'll see her in ten minutes."

When the man had disappeared my friend took me by the arm, saying: "Let us walk along slowly, while I tell you this story.

"Seven years ago, when I arrived here, I went out one evening to take a walk in the forest. It was a beautiful day, like to-day, and I was walking along slowly under the great trees, looking at the stars through the leaves, drinking in the quiet restfulness of night and the forest.

"I had just left Paris forever. I was tired out, more disgusted than I can say by all the foolish, low, and nasty things which I had seen and in which I had participated for fifteen years.

"I walked along for a great distance in this deep forest, following a path which leads to the village of Crouzille, about eight miles from here.

"Suddenly my dog, a great St. Bernard, which never left me, stopped short and began to growl. I thought that perhaps a fox, a wolf, or a boar might be in the neighborhood; I advanced gently on tiptoe, in order to make no noise, but suddenly I heard mournful, human cries, piercing yet muffled. I thought that surely some one was committing murder, and I rushed forward, taking a tight grip on my heavy oak cane, a regular club.

"I was coming nearer to the moans, which now became more distinct, but strangely muffled. One might have thought that they were coming from some house, perhaps from the hut of some charcoal burner. Three feet ahead of me Bock was running, stopping, barking, starting again, very excited, and always growling. Suddenly another dog, a big black one with snapping eyes, barred our progress. I could clearly see his white fangs, which seemed to be shining in his mouth.

"I ran toward him with uplifted cane, but Bock had already jumped, and the two beasts were rolling around the ground with their teeth buried in each other. I went past them and almost bumped into a horse lying in the road. As I stopped, in surprise, to examine the animal, I saw in front of me a wagon, or, rather, a rolling house, such as are inhabited by gypsies and the traveling merchants who go from fair to fair.

" The cries were coming from there, frightful and continuous. As the door opened from the other side I turned around this vehicle and rushed up the three wooden steps, ready to jump on the male-factor.

" What I saw seemed so strange to me that I could at first understand nothing. A man was kneeling, and seemed to be praying, while in the bed something impossible to recognize, a half-naked creature, whose face I could not see, was moving, twisting about, and howling. It was a woman in labor.

" As soon as I understood the kind of an accident which was the cause of these screams, I made my presence known, and the man, wild with grief, begged me to save him, to save her, promising to me an unbelievable thankfulness. I had never seen a birth; I had never helped a female creature, woman, dog, or cat, in such a circumstance, and I said so as I foolishly watched this thing which was screaming so in the bed.

" Then I gathered my wits again, and I asked the grief-stricken man why he did not go to the next village. It seems that his horse had stepped into a rut and had broken part of his leg.

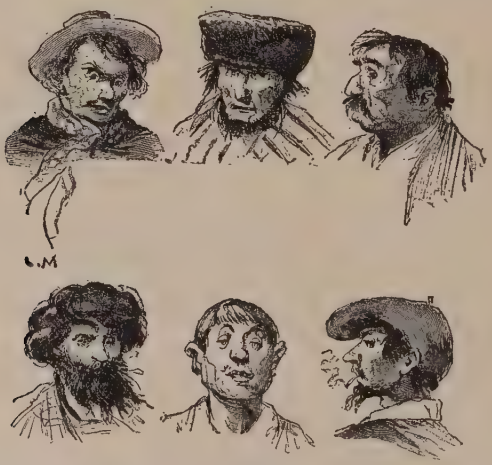
" ' Well, my man,' I exclaimed, ' there are two of us now, and we will drag your wife to my house.'

" But the howling dogs forced us to go outside, and we had to separate them by beating them with our sticks, at the risk of killing them. Then the idea struck me to harness them with us, one to the right and the other to the left, in order to help us. In ten minutes everything was ready, and the wagon started forward slowly, shaking the poor, suffering woman each time it would bump over a rut.

" Such a road, my friend! We were going along, panting, perspiring, slipping, and falling, while our poor dogs puffed along beside us.

" It took three hours to reach the cottage. When we arrived before the door the cries from the wagon had ceased. Mother and child were getting along well.

" They were put to bed, and then I had a horse harnessed up in order to go for a physician, while the man, an inhabitant of Marseilles, reassured,



consoled, glorying, was stuffing himself with food and getting drunk in order to celebrate this happy birth.

" It was a girl.

" I kept these people with me for a week. The mother, Mademoiselle Elmire, was an extraordinarily lucid somnambulist, who promised me an interminable life and countless joys.

" The following year, at exactly the same date, toward nightfall, the servant who has just called

me came to me in the smoking-room after dinner and said: 'It's the gypsy of last year who has come to thank Monsieur.'

"I had her come in the house, and I remained dumfounded as I saw beside her a tall blond fellow, a man from the North, who bowed and spoke to me as chief of the community. He had heard of my kindness for Mademoiselle Elmire, and he had not wished to let this anniversary go by without bringing to me their thanks and a testimony of their gratefulness.

"I gave them supper in the kitchen, and offered them my hospitality for the night. They left the following day.

"The woman returns every year at the same date with the child, a fine little girl, and a new man . . . each time. One man only, a fellow from Auvergne, came back two years in succession. The little girl calls them all 'Papa,' just as one says 'Monsieur' with us."

We were arriving at the cottage, and we could barely distinguish three shadows standing on the porch, waiting for us. The tallest one took a few steps forward, made a great bow, and said: "Monsieur le Comte, we have come to-day in recognition of our gratefulness. . . ."

He was a Belgian!

After him, the little one spoke in the shrill, singsing voice which children use when they recite a composition.

I played ignorance, and I took Mademoiselle Elmire to the side, and, after a few questions, I asked her: "Is that the father of your child?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur."

"Is the father dead?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur. We still see each other from time to time. He is a gendarme."

"What! then it wasn't the fellow from Marseilles who was there at the birth?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur. That was a rascal who stole all my savings."

"And the gendarme, the real father, does he know his child?"

"Oh! yes, Monsieur, and he loves her very much; but he can't take care of her because he has other ones from his wife."

A SALE

THE defendants, Césaire-Isidore Brument and Prosper Napoléon Cornu, appeared before the Court of Assizes of the Seine-Inférieure on a charge of attempted murder, by drowning, of Madame Brument, lawful wife of the first of the aforenamed.

The two prisoners sat side by side on the traditional bench. They were two peasants; the first was small and stout, with short arms, short legs, and a round head, with a red, pimply face planted directly on his trunk, which was also round and short, and with apparently no neck. He was a raiser of pigs, and lived at Cacheville-la-Goupil, in the Canton of Criquetot.

Cornu (Prosper-Napoléon) was thin, of medium height, with enormously long arms. His head was

on crooked, his jaw awry, and he squinted. A blue blouse, as long as a shirt, hung down to his knees, and his yellow hair, which was scanty and plastered down on his head, gave his face a worn-out, dirty look, a ruined look that was frightful. He had been nicknamed "the *curé*," because he could imitate to perfection the chanting in church and even the sound of the serpent. This talent attracted to his café—for he was a saloon keeper at Criquetot—a great many customers who preferred the "mass at Cornu" to the mass in church.

Madame Brument, seated on the witness bench, was a thin peasant woman, who seemed to be always asleep. She sat there motionless, her hands crossed on her knees, gazing fixedly before her with a stupid expression.

The Judge continued his interrogation:

"Well, then, Madame Brument, they came into your house and threw you into a barrel full of water. Tell us the details. Stand up."

She rose. She looked as tall as a flagpole, with her cap, which appeared like a white skull cap. She said, in a drawling tone:

"I was shelling beans. Just then they came in. I said to myself: 'What is the matter with them? They do not seem natural; they seem up to some mischief.' They watched me sideways, like this, especially Cornu, because he squints. I do not like to see them together, for they are two good-for-nothings when they are in company. I said: 'What do you want with me?' They did not answer. I had a sort of mistrust——"

The defendant Brument interrupted the witness hastily, saying:

"I was full."

Then Cornu, turning toward his accomplice, said, in the deep tones of an organ:

"Say that we were both full, and you will be telling no lie."

The Judge, severely: "You mean by that you were both drunk?"

Brument: "There can be no question about it."

Cornu: "That might happen to any one."

The Judge, to the victim: "Continue your testimony, woman Brument."

"Well, Brument said to me, 'Do you wish to earn a hundred sous?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'seeing that a hundred sous are not picked up in a horse's tracks.' Then he said: 'Open your eyes and do as I do,' and he went to fetch the large empty barrel which is under the rain pipe in the corner, and he turned it over and brought it into my kitchen, and stuck it down in the middle of the floor, and then he said to me: 'Go and fetch water until it is full.'

"'So I went to the pond with two pails and carried water, and still more water for an hour, seeing that the barrel was as large as a vat, saving your presence, Monsieur le Président.

"All this time Brument and Cornu were drinking a glass, and then another glass, and then another. They were finishing their drinks when I said to them: 'You are full, fuller than this barrel.' And Brument answered me: 'Do not worry; go on with your work; your turn will come; each one has his share.' I paid no attention to what he said, as he was full.

"When the barrel was full to the brim, I said: 'There, that's done.'

"And then Cornu gave me a hundred sous. Not

Brument, Cornu; it was Cornu gave them to me. And Brument said: 'Do you wish to earn a hundred sous more?' 'Yes,' I said, for I am not accustomed to presents like that. Then he said: 'Take off your clothes.'

"'Take off my clothes?'

"'Yes,' he said.

"'How many shall I take off?'

"'If it worries you at all, keep on your chemise, that won't bother us.'

"A hundred sous, that is a hundred sous, and I have to undress myself, but I did not fancy undressing before those two good-for-nothings. I took off my cap, and then my jacket, and then my skirt, and then my sabots. Brument said: 'Keep on your stockings, also; we are good fellows.'

"And Cornu said, too: 'We are good fellows.'

"So there I was, almost like Mother Eve. And they got up from their chairs, but could not stand straight, they were so full, saving your presence, Monsieur le Président.

"I said to myself: 'What are they up to?'

"And Brument said: 'Are you ready?'

"And Cornu said: 'I'm ready!'

"And then they took me, Brument by the head and Cornu by the feet, as one might take, for instance, a sheet that has been washed. Then I began to bawl.

"And Brument said: 'Keep still, wretched creature.'

"And they lifted me up in the air and put me into the barrel which was full of water, so that I had a check of the circulation, a chill to my very insides.

"And Brument said: 'Is that all?'

" Cornu said: ' That is all.'

" Brument said: ' The head is not in; that will make a difference in the measure.'

" Cornu said: ' Put in her head.'

" And then Brument pushed down my head as if to drown me, so that I could already see Paradise. And he pushed it down, and I disappeared.

" And then he must have been frightened. He pulled me out and said: ' Go and get dry, carcass.'

" As for me, I took to my heels and ran as far as Monsieur le curé's. He lent me a skirt belonging to his servant, for I was almost in a state of nature, and he went to fetch Maître Chicot, the country watchman, who went to Criquetot to fetch the police, who came to my house with me.

" There we found Brument and Cornu fighting each other like two rams.

" Brument was bawling: ' It isn't true; I tell you that there is at least a cubic meter in it. It is the method that was no good.'

" Cornu bawled: ' Four pails, that is almost half a cubic meter. You need not reply, that's what it is.'

" The police captain put them both under arrest. I have no more to tell."

She sat down. The audience in the courtroom laughed. The jurors looked at one another in astonishment. The judge said:

" Defendant Cornu, you seem to have been the instigator of this infamous plot. What have you to say? "

And Cornu rose in his turn.

" Judge," he replied, " I was full."

The Judge answered gravely:

"I know it. Proceed."

"I will. Well, Brument came to my place about nine o'clock, and ordered two drinks, and said: 'Here's one for you, Cornu.' I sat down opposite him and drank, and, out of politeness, I offered him a glass. Then he returned the compliment and so did I, and so it went on from glass to glass until noon, when we were full.

"Then Brument began to cry. That touched me. I asked him what was the matter. He said: 'I must have a thousand francs by Thursday.' That cooled me off a little, you understand. Then he said to me all at once: 'I will sell you my wife.'

"I was full, and I was a widower. You understand, that stirred me up. I did not know his wife, but she was a woman, wasn't she? I asked him: 'How much would you sell her for?'

"He reflected, or pretended to reflect. When one is full one is not very clear-headed, and he replied: 'I will sell her by the cubic meter.'

"That did not surprise me, for I was as drunk as he was, and I knew what a cubic meter is in my business. It is a thousand liters. That suited me.

"But the price remained to be settled. All depends on the quality. I said: 'How much do you want a cubic meter?'

"He answered: 'Two thousand francs.'

"I gave a bound like a rabbit, and then I reflected that a woman ought not to measure more than three hundred liters, so I said: 'That's too dear.'

"He answered: 'I cannot do it for less. I should lose by it.'

"You understand one is not a dealer in hogs for nothing. One understands one's business. But

if he is smart, the seller of bacon, I am smarter, seeing that I sell them, also. Ha! ha! ha! So I said to him: 'If she were new I would not say anything, but she has been married to you for some time, so she is not as fresh as she was. I will give you fifteen hundred francs a cubic meter, not a sou more. Will that suit you?'

"He answered: 'That's a bargain!'

"I agreed, and we started out, arm in arm. We must help each other in this world.

"But a fear came to me: 'How can you measure her unless you put her into the liquid?'

"Then he explained his idea, not without difficulty, for he was full. He said to me: 'I take a barrel and fill it with water to the brim. I put her in it. All the water that comes out we will measure; that is the way to fix it.'

"I said: 'I see, I understand. But this water that overflows will run away; how are you going to gather it up?'

"Then he began stuffing me, and explained to me that all we should have to do would be to refill the barrel with the water his wife had displaced as soon as she should have left. All the water we should pour in would be the measure. I supposed about ten pails; that would be a cubic meter. He isn't a fool, all the same, when he is drunk, that old horse.

"To be brief, we reached his house, and I took a look at its mistress. A beautiful woman she certainly was not. Any one can see her, for there she is. I said to myself: 'I am disappointed, but never mind, she will be of value; handsome or ugly, it is all the same, is it not, Monsieur le Président?' And then I saw that she was as thin as a rail. I

said to myself: 'She will not measure four hundred liters.' I understand the matter, it being in liquids.

"She told you about the proceeding. I even let her keep on her chemise and stockings, to my own disadvantage.

"When that was done she ran away. I said: 'Look out, Brument! she is escaping.'

"He replied: 'Do not be afraid, I will catch her, all right. She will have to come back to sleep. I will measure the deficit.'

"We measured. Not four pailfuls. Ha! ha! ha!"

The witness began to laugh so persistently that a gendarme was obliged to punch him in the back. Having quieted down, he resumed:

"In short, Brument exclaimed: 'Nothing doing; that is not enough.' I bawled and bawled, and bawled again, he punched me, I hit back. That would have kept on till the Day of Judgment, seeing we were both drunk.

"Then came the gendarmes! They swore at us, they took us off to prison. I want damages."

He sat down.

Brument confirmed in every particular the statements of his accomplice. The jury, in consternation, retired to deliberate.

At the end of an hour they returned a verdict of acquittal for the defendants, with some severe strictures on the dignity of marriage, and establishing the precise limitations of business transactions.

Brument went home to the domestic roof accompanied by his wife.

Cornu went back to his business.

OUR ENGLISH NEIGHBORS

A LITTLE bound notebook lay on the cushioned seat of the railway carriage. I took it up and opened it. It was a diary of travel, lost by some traveler:

I copy here the last three pages:

February 1. Mentone, chief city of consumptives, celebrated for its pulmonary tubercles. Very different from the tubercle of the sweet potato, which lives and germinates in the earth to nourish and fatten human beings, this species of vegetation lives and germinates in man to nourish and enrich the soil.

I got this scientific definition from a kind and learned physician of the district.

I am looking for a hotel; I am directed to the gr-r-r-eat Hôtel de Russie, d'Angleterre, et des Pays-Bas.

With great respect for the cosmopolitan intelli-

gence of the proprietor, I take a room in this hospital, which seems to me to be empty, it is so large.

Then I take a walk round the town, which is pretty and pleasantly situated at the foot of an imposing mountain (see the guide-books). I meet people who have a sickly appearance being led about by others who look bored. Here one meets many mufflers. (This is for naturalists, who might be troubled at their disappearance.)

Six o'clock. I come home to dinner. The table was laid in a vast dining-room, which was intended for three hundred guests, but which at present shelters exactly twenty-two. They come in one after another. First comes a tall Englishman, close-shaven and thin, with a long, tight-fitting frock-coat, the sleeves of which confine his thin arms as an umbrella sheath covers an umbrella. This garment, which recalled the civilian uniform of old army captains, the dress of invalided veterans, and the cassock of priests, was ornamented down the front with a row of black cloth buttons, placed close to each other like a battalion of wood-lice. On the opposite side was a row of buttonholes.

The waistcoat was fastened in the same manner. The owner of this suit does not appear to be humorous.

He bows to me. I return his politeness.

Second entry. Three ladies, Englishwomen, a mother and two daughters. Each wears on her head what looks like a beaten egg, which astonishes me. The daughters are as old as the mother, the mother is as old as the daughters. They are all three thin, with flat figures, tall, slow, and stiff, and they show their teeth to inspire men and food with fear.

Other guests enter, all English. One of them alone is big and red-faced, with white whiskers. Every woman (there are fourteen) wears on her head a beaten egg. I perceive that this *entremet* headdress is made of white lace or foamy tulle, I do not know which. It does not appear to be sweetened. All these ladies appear to have been preserved in vinegar, although there are five young girls among them, not bad-looking, but hopelessly flat-figured.

I recall Bouilhet's lines:

"Qu' importe ton sein maigre, ô mon objet aimé?
On est plus près du cœur quand la poitrine est plate,
Et je vois, comme un merle en sa cage enfermé,
L' amour entre tes os, rêvant sur une patte."

Two young men, younger than the first, are also inclosed in priestly frock-coats. They are lay brothers, with wives and children, called pastors. They look cleaner, more serious, and less amiable than our priests. I would not exchange a ton of these for a barrel of those. Every one to his taste.

As soon as the guests were all in the head pastor took the floor and pronounced in English a sort of very long *Bénédicité,* to which every one at table listened with a penitent air.

The food being thus consecrated, in spite of myself, to the God of Israel and of Albion, every one began to eat his soup.

A solemn silence reigned in the spacious dining-room, a silence that could not be normal. I suppose my presence is disagreeable to this colony, into which no tainted sheep had entered hitherto.

The women, in particular, have an appearance of stiffness and restraint, as if they feared that

their little headdress of beaten egg might fall into their plates.

However, the head pastor addressed a few words to his neighbor, the assistant pastor. As I have the misfortune to understand a little English, I noticed with astonishment that they were resuming a conversation that had been interrupted before dinner, on the sayings of the prophets.

Every one listened reflectively.

Then they fed me, still in spite of myself, on incredible quotations.

"I will pour out water for him that is thirsty," said Isaiah.

I knew nothing about it. I also knew nothing about all the truths uttered by Jeremiah, Malachi, Ezekiel, etc.

They entered my ears like flies, these simple truths, and buzzed in my brain.

"Let him that hungers ask bread."

"The air belongs to the birds as the sea belongs to the fishes."

"The fig tree yields figs and the palm dates."

"The man who does not heed will not obtain wisdom."

How much grander and deeper is our great Henri Monnier, who makes one man, the immortal Prud'homme, utter more brilliant truths than all the prophets combined!

He cries on seeing the ocean: "The ocean is beautiful, but what a waste of land!"

He formulates the eternal policy of the world: "This sword is the most beautiful day of my life. I shall know how to use it to protect the Power that gives it to me, and, if necessary, to attack it."

If I had had the honor to be introduced to the

company of English people by whom I was surrounded, I should assuredly have edified them with selected quotations from our French prophet.

When dinner was over we went into the drawing-room.

I sat alone in a corner. The British tribe seemed to be conspiring at the other end of the spacious room. Suddenly, a lady moved toward the piano.

"Ah! a little music," I thought; "so much the better."

She opened the instrument, sat down before it, and all the colony surrounded her like a battalion, the women on the inside and the men standing behind them.

Are they about to sing an opera?

The head pastor, now become leader of the choir, raised his hand, then lowered it, and a nameless, frightful clamor escaped from all these mouths, which were singing a hymn.

The women squalled, the men roared, the windows shook. The hotel dog began to howl out in the yard and was answered by another in one of the rooms.

I fled, terrified, furious, and went for a walk through the town. Not finding any theater, or casino, or place of amusement, I had to come home again.

The English were still singing.

I went to bed. They kept on singing. They sang until midnight the praise of the Lord with the most discordant, screeching, odious voices I ever heard; while I, possessed by that horrible spirit of mimicry which led away an entire people in a dance of death, was humming beneath the sheets:

"I am sorry for the Lord, the Lord God of Albion,
Whose glory they are singing in the parlor.
If the Lord has more ear
Than his faithful people,
If he loves talent, beauty,
Grace, wit, mirth,
Excellent mimicry and good music, I pity the Lord with all my heart!"

And when at last I was able to sleep, I had frightful nightmare. I saw prophets riding on the backs of the pastors and eating beaten eggs on the heads of corpses.

Horror! Horror!

February 2. As soon as I rose I asked the proprietor whether these barbarians, who had invaded his hotel, renewed their frightful amusement each day.

He answered, smiling:

"Oh, no, Monsieur; yesterday was Sunday, and you know that with them Sunday is sacred."

I replied:

"Nothing is sacred for a pastor,
Neither the sleep of a traveler,
Nor his dinner, nor his ear.
But see to it that a similar thing
Does not occur again,
Or without hesitation
I shall take the train."

A little surprised, the proprietor promised that he would keep a lookout.

I took a very pretty walk on the mountainside during the course of the day.

When evening came I even took part in the *Bénédicité.* Then I went into the drawing-room.

What are they about to do? For a whole hour they did nothing. Suddenly, the same lady who played the accompaniment for the hymns the preceding evening moved toward the piano and opened it. I trembled with fear. She began to play—a waltz!

And the young girls began to dance.

The head pastor beat time on his knee from long habit. The Englishmen asked the ladies to dance, and the beaten eggs turned round and round and round like whirling dervishes.

I enjoyed that more than hymns. After the waltz came a quadrille and a polka.

Not having been introduced, I remained sequestered in a corner.

February 3. Another pretty walk to the old Castelar, a charming ruin on the mountain, which has remains of fortresses on all its summits.

There is nothing so beautiful as these ruins of strongholds amid the chaos of rocks which command the Alpine snows (see guide-book). This country is delightful.

During the dinner I introduced myself, French fashion, to my neighbor. She did not make any reply—English politeness!

In the evening they had an English ball.

February 4. Excursion to Monaco (see guide-book).

In the evening an English ball at which I took part, and was treated as if I carried infection.

February 5. Excursion to San Remo (see guide-book). Evening—English ball. My quarantine continues.

February 6. Excursion to Nice (see guide-book). Evening—English ball. I went to bed.

February 7. Excursion to Cannes (see guide-

book). Evening—English ball. I drank a cup of tea in my corner.

February 8. Sunday, grand revenge. I was waiting for them, the upstarts!

They had resumed their penitent Sunday air and were preparing their voices to sing hymns.

Now, before dinner, I slipped into the drawing-room, took the key of the piano and put it in my pocket, and said to the office clerk:

"If the parsons ask for the key tell them that I took it, and ask them to come and see me."

During dinner they discussed several disputed Scriptural passages, explained texts, and cleared up the genealogies of biblical personages.

Then they went into the drawing-room and walked over to the piano. Consternation!

They take counsel together. The tribe seems cast down. The beaten eggs seem ready to fly away. At length the head pastor leaves the room and presently returns. They discuss the matter and look at me with indignant eyes; and then the three pastors move in my direction, one behind another, like ambassadors. They look quite imposing.

They bow to me. I rise from my seat. The oldest of them addresses me:

"Monsieur, they tell me that you have taken the key of the piano. The ladies would like to have it so that they can sing hymns."

I replied:

"Monsieur l'Abbé, I understand perfectly the request of these ladies; but I cannot grant it. You are a religious man, Monsieur, and so am I, and my principles, doubtless more strict than your own, have decided me to prevent the profanation to which you are yielding yourselves.

"I cannot permit, gentlemen, that you should employ, in order to sing to the glory of God, an instrument that has been used all the week to make young girls dance. We do not give public balls in our churches, Monsieur, and we do not play quadrilles on organs. The use to which you put the piano angers and shocks me. You may take my reply to the ladies."

The three pastors retired in dismay. The ladies appeared amazed. And they began to sing hymns without the piano.

February 9. Noon. The hotel proprietor came to ask me to leave. They are expelling me at the general request of the English.

I met the three pastors, who seemed to be superintending my departure. I went straight up to them. I bowed.

"Gentlemen," I said, "you seem to be very well informed on the subject of the Scriptures. Personally I have given quite a little study to these subjects. I even know a little Hebrew. Now, I should like to submit to you a matter that troubles my Catholic conscience very much."

And, after shocking them with a *résumé* of some biblical genealogies, I declared it was scandalous to make us read ten pages of genealogy at dessert.

"We spoil our eyes in order to learn that A . . . begat B . . ., who begat C . . ., who begat D . . ., who begat E . . ., who begat F . . ., and when we are almost crazy from this interminable list, we arrive at the last, who begat nobody. We may call that, gentlemen, the acme of mystification!"

The three pastors abruptly turned their backs on me as one man and fled.

Two o'clock. I am taking the train for Nice.

The journal ends here. Although these notes show extremely bad taste, a common mind, and much coarseness, I thought that they might put certain travelers on their guard against the danger from English tourists.

I must add that there are charming English people; I know some, and many of them. But as a rule they are not those we meet in hotels.

TIMBUCTOO

THE boulevard, that river of humanity, was alive with people in the golden light of the setting sun. The whole sky was red, blinding; and behind the Madeleine a great bank of flaming clouds cast a shower of light the whole length of the boulevard, vibrant as the heat from a brazier.

The gay, animated crowd went by in this golden mist, and seemed to be glorified. Their faces were gilded, their black hats and clothes took on purple tints, the patent leather of their shoes cast bright reflections on the asphalt of the sidewalk.

Before the cafés a mass of men were drinking opalescent liquids that looked like precious stones dissolved in the glasses.

In the midst of the drinkers two officers in full uniform dazzled all eyes with their glittering gold

lace. They chatted, happy without asking why, in this glory of life, in this radiant light of sunset, and they looked at the crowd, the leisurely men and the hurrying women, who left a bewildering odor of perfume as they passed by.

All at once an enormous negro, dressed in black, with a paunch beneath his jean waistcoat, which was covered with charms, his face shining as if it had been polished, passed before them with a triumphant air. He laughed at the passers-by, at the news vendors, at the dazzling sky, at the whole of Paris. He was so tall that he overtopped every one else, and when he passed all the loungers turned round to look at his back.

But he suddenly perceived the officers, and darted toward them, jostling the drinkers in his path. As soon as he reached their table he fixed his gleaming and delighted eyes upon them, and the corners of his mouth expanded to his ears, showing his dazzling white teeth like a crescent moon in a black sky. The two men looked in astonishment at this ebony giant, unable to understand his delight.

With a voice that made all the guests laugh, he said:

"Good day, my Lieutenant."

One of the officers was commander of a battalion, the other was a colonel. The former said:

"I do not know you, sir; I am at a loss to know what you want of me."

"We like you much, Lieutenant Védié, siege of Bézi, much grapes, find me."

The officer, utterly bewildered, looked at the man intently, trying to refresh his memory; then he cried abruptly:

"Timbuctoo?"

The negro, radiant, slapped his thigh as he uttered a tremendous laugh and roared:

"Yes, yes, my Lieutenant, you remember Timbuctoo! Ya, how do you do?"

The commandant held out his hand, laughing heartily as he did so. Then Timbuctoo became serious. He seized the officer's hand, and, before the other could prevent it, he kissed it, according to negro and Arab custom. The officer, embarrassed, said in a severe tone:

"Come, now, Timbuctoo, we are not in Africa. Sit down there and tell me how it is I find you here."

Timbuctoo swelled himself out and, his words falling over one another, replied hurriedly:

"I make much money, much, big restaurant, good food, Prussians, me much steal, much, French cooking, Timbuctoo, cook to the Emperor, two thousand francs mine. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

And he laughed, doubling himself up, roaring, with wild delight in his glances.

When the officer, who understood his strange manner of expressing himself, had questioned him, he said:

"Well, *au revoir,* Timbuctoo. I will see you again."

The negro rose, this time shaking the hand that was extended to him, and, smiling still, cried:

"Good day, good day, my Lieutenant!"

He went off, so happy that he gesticulated as he walked, and people thought he was crazy.

"Who is that brute?" asked the Colonel.

"A fine fellow and a brave soldier. I will tell you what I know about him. It is funny enough.

"You know that at the beginning of the war

of 1870 I was shut up in Bezières, which this negro called Bézi. We were not besieged, but blockaded. The Prussian lines surrounded us on all sides, outside the reach of cannon, not firing on us, but slowly starving us out.

"I was then lieutenant. Our garrison consisted of all descriptions of soldiers, fragments of slaughtered regiments, some that had run away, and freebooters separated from the main army. We had all kinds—in fact, even eleven—Turcos (Algerian soldiers in the service of France), who arrived one evening no one knew whence or how. They appeared at the gates of the city, exhausted, in rags, starving and dirty. They were handed over to me.

"I saw very soon that they were absolutely undisciplined, always in the street, and always drunk. I tried putting them in the police station, even in prison, but nothing was of any use. They would disappear, sometimes for days at a time, as if they had been swallowed up by the earth, and then come back staggering drunk. They had no money. Where did they buy drink? And how, and with what?

"This began to worry me greatly, all the more as these savages interested me with their everlasting laugh and their characteristics of overgrown, frolicsome children.

"I then noticed that they blindly obeyed the largest among them, the one you have just seen. He made them do as he pleased, and planned their mysterious expeditions with the all-powerful and undisputed authority of a leader. I sent for him and questioned him. Our conversation lasted fully three hours, for it was hard for me to understand

his remarkable gibberish. As for him, poor devil, he made unheard-of efforts to make himself intelligible, invented words, gesticulated, perspired in his anxiety, mopping his forehead, puffing, stopping, and abruptly beginning again when he thought he had formed a new method of explaining what he wanted to say.

"I gathered, finally, that he was the son of a big chief, a sort of negro king of the region around Timbuctoo. I asked his name. He repeated something like *Chavaharibouhalikranapotapolara.* It seemed simpler to me to give him the name of his native place, Timbuctoo. And a week later he was known by no other name in the garrison.

"But we were all wildly anxious to find out where this African ex-prince procured his drinks. I discovered it in a singular manner.

"I was on the ramparts one morning, watching the horizon, when I perceived something moving about in a vineyard. It was near the time of vintage, the grapes were ripe, but I was not thinking of that. I thought that a spy was approaching the town, and I organized a complete expedition to catch the prowler. I took command myself, after obtaining permission from the general.

"I sent out by three different gates three little companies, which were to meet at the suspected vineyard and form a cordon round it. In order to cut off the spy's retreat one of these detachments had to make at least an hour's march. A watch on the walls signaled to me that the person I had seen had not left the place. We went along in profound silence, creeping, almost crawling along the paths. At last we reached the spot assigned.

"I abruptly disbanded my soldiers, who darted

into the vineyard, and found—Timbuctoo, on hands and knees, traveling round among the vines and eating grapes, or, rather, devouring them as a dog eats his sop, snatching them in mouthfuls from the vine with his teeth.

"I wanted him to get up, but he could not think of it. I then understood why he was crawling on his hands and knees. As soon as we stood him on his feet he began to wabble, then stretched out his arms and fell down on his nose. He was more drunk than I have ever seen any one.

"They brought him home on two poles. He never stopped laughing all the way back, while gesticulating with his arms and legs.

"This explained the mystery. My men also drank the juice of the grapes, and when they were so intoxicated they could not stir, they went to sleep in the vineyard. As for Timbuctoo, his love of the vineyard was beyond all belief and all bounds. He lived in it as did the thrushes, which he hated with the jealous hatred of a rival. He repeated incessantly:

"'The thrushes eat all the grapes, Captain!'

"One evening I was sent for. Something had been seen on the plain coming in our direction. I had not brought my field-glass, and I could not distinguish things clearly. It looked like a great serpent uncoiling itself—a convoy, how could I tell?

"I sent some men to meet this strange caravan, which presently made its triumphal entry. Timbuctoo and nine of his comrades were carrying, on a sort of altar made of camp stools, eight severed, grinning and bleeding heads. The African was dragging along a horse to whose tail another head

was fastened, and six other animals followed, adorned in the same manner.

" This is what I learned. Having set out for the vineyard, my Africans had suddenly perceived a detachment of Prussians approaching a village. Instead of taking to their heels they hid themselves, and as soon as the Prussian officers dismounted at an inn to refresh themselves, the eleven rascals rushed on them, put to flight the lancers, who thought they were being attacked by the main army, killed the two sentries, then the Colonel and the five officers of his escort.

" That day I kissed Timbuctoo. I saw, however, that he walked with difficulty, and thought he was wounded. He laughed and said:

" ' Me, provisions for my country.'

" Timbuctoo was not fighting for glory, but for gain. Everything he found that seemed to him to be of the slightest value, especially anything that glistened, he put in his pocket. What a pocket! An abyss that began at his hips and reached to his ankles. He had retained an old term used by the troopers, and called it his *profonde,* and it was his *profonde,* in fact!

" He had taken the gold lace off the Prussian uniforms, the brass off their helmets, detached their buttons, and had thrown them all into his *profonde,* which was full to overflowing.

" Each day he pocketed every glistening object that came to his observation: pieces of tin or pieces of silver, and sometimes his contour was very comical.

" He intended to carry all that back to the land of ostriches, whose brother he might have been, this son of a king, tormented with the longing to gobble

up all objects that glistened. If he had not had his *profonde,* what would he have done? Doubtless he would have swallowed them.

" Every morning his pocket was empty. He had, then, some general store where his riches were piled up. But where? I could not discover it.

" The General, on being informed of Timbuctoo's mighty act of valor, had the headless bodies that had been left in the neighboring village interred at once, that it might not be discovered that they were decapitated. The Prussians returned thither the following day. The Mayor and seven prominent inhabitants were shot on the spot, by way of reprisal, as having denounced the Prussians.

" Winter arrived. We were exhausted and desperate. There were skirmishes every day. The famished men could no longer march. The eight ' Turcos ' alone (three had been killed) remained fat, shiny, vigorous, and always ready to fight. Timbuctoo was even getting fatter. He said to me one day:

" ' You, much hungry, me good meat.'

" And he brought me an excellent *filet.* But of what? We had no more cattle, nor sheep, nor goats, nor donkeys, nor pigs. It was impossible to find a horse. I thought of all this after I had devoured my meat. Then a horrible idea came to me. These negroes were born close to a country where they eat human beings! And each day such a number of soldiers were killed around the town. I questioned Timbuctoo. He would not answer. I did not insist, but from that time I declined his presents.

" He worshiped me. One night snow took us by surprise at the outposts. We were seated on the ground. I looked with pity at those poor negroes,

shivering beneath the white, frozen shower. I was very cold and began to cough. At once I felt something fall on me, like a large warm quilt. It was Timbuctoo's cape, which he had thrown on my shoulders.

"I rose and returned his garment, saying:

"'Keep it, my boy; you need it more than I.'

"'No, my Lieutenant, for you; me no need, me hot, hot!'

"And he looked at me entreatingly.

"'Come, obey orders! Keep your cape. I insist,' I repeated.

"He stood up, drew his sword, which he had sharpened to an edge like a scythe, and, holding in his other hand the large cape which I had refused, said:

"'If you not keep cape, me cut; no one cape.'

"And he would have done it. So I yielded.

"Eight days later we capitulated. Some of us had been able to escape. The rest were to march out of the town and give themselves up to the conquerors.

"I went toward the exercising-ground, where we were all to meet, when I was dumfounded at the sight of a gigantic negro dressed in white duck and wearing a straw hat. It was Timbuctoo. He was beaming and was walking with his hands in his pockets, in front of a little shop where two plates and two glasses were displayed.

"'What are you doing?' I asked.

"'Me not go, me good cook, me make food for Colonel, Algeria; me eat P'ussians, much steal, much.'

"There were ten degrees of frost. I shivered

at sight of this negro in white duck. He took me by the arm and made me go inside. I noticed a large flag that he intended to place outside his door as soon as we had left, for he had some shame. I read this sign, traced by the hand of some accomplice:

"'Army kitchen of M. Timbuctoo,
"'Formerly cook to H. M. the Emperor.
"'*A Parisian Artist! Moderate Prices.*'

"In spite of the despair that was gnawing at my heart, I could not help laughing, and I left my negro to his new enterprise.

"Was not that better than taking him prisoner?

"You have just seen that he made a success of it, the rascal.

"Bezières to-day belongs to the Germans. The Restaurant Timbuctoo is the beginning of a retaliation."

THE EFFEMINATES

HOW often we hear people say: "He is charming, that man, but he is a girl, a regular girl." They are alluding to the girl-man, the bane of our land.

For we are all girl-men in France —that is, fickle, fanciful, innocently treacherous, without consistency in our convictions or our will; violent and weak as women are.

But the most irritating of girl-men is assuredly the Parisian and the *boulevardier,* in whom the appearance of intelligence is more marked, and who combines in himself all the attractions and all the faults of those charming creatures in an exaggerated degree in virtue of his masculine temperament.

Our Chamber of Deputies is full of girl-men. They form the greater number of the amiable opportunists whom one might call "the charmers."

These are they who control by soft words and deceitful promises, who know how to shake hands in such a manner as to win hearts; how to say "My dear friend" in a certain tactful way to persons they know the least; to change their mind without suspecting it; to be carried away by each new idea; to be sincere in their weathercock convictions; to let themselves be deceived as they deceive others; to forget the next morning what they affirmed the day before.

The newspapers are full of these effeminate men. That is probably where one finds the most of them, but it is also where they are most needed. The *Journal des Débats* and the *Gazette de France* are exceptions.

Assuredly, every good journalist must be somewhat effeminate, that is, at the command of the public, supple in following unconsciously the shades of public opinion, wavering and varying, skeptical and credulous, wicked and devout, a braggart and a true man, enthusiastic and ironical, and always appearing to be convinced while believing in nothing.

Foreigners, our antitypes, as Madame Abel called them, the stubborn English and the heavy Germans, regard us with a certain amazement, mingled with contempt, and will continue so to regard us till the end of time. They consider us frivolous. It is not that; it is that we are girls. And that is the reason why people love us in spite of our faults, why they come back to us despite the evil spoken of us; these are mere lovers' quarrels!

The effeminate man, as one meets him in the world, is so charming that he captivates you after five minutes' chat. His smile seems made for you; one cannot believe that his voice does not assume

specially tender intonations on his hearer's account. When he leaves it seems as if one had known him for twenty years. One is quite ready to lend him money should he ask for it. He has enchanted you, like a woman.

If he commits any breach of manners toward you, you cannot bear any malice, he is so pleasant when you next meet him. If he asks your pardon, you long to ask pardon of him! Does he tell lies? You cannot believe it. Does he put you off indefinitely with promises that he does not keep? One relies upon his promises as if he had moved heaven and earth to render a service.

When he admires anything he goes into such raptures that he convinces you. He once adored Victor Hugo, whom he now treats as an antiquity. He would have fought for Zola, whom he has abandoned for Barbey d'Aurevilly. And when he admires he permits no limitation, he would slap your face for a word. But when he becomes scornful his contempt is unbounded and allows no protest.

In fact, he understands nothing.

Listen to two girls talking:

"Then you are angry with Julia?"

"I slapped her face."

"What had she done?"

"She told Pauline that I had no money thirteen months out of twelve. And Pauline told Gontran—you understand."

"You were living together in the Rue Clauzel?"

"We lived together four years ago in the Rue Bréda. We quarreled about a pair of stockings that she said I had worn—it wasn't true—silk stockings that she had bought at Mother Martin's. Then I

gave her a pounding and she left me at once. I met her six months ago, and she asked me to come and live with her, as she has rented a flat that is twice too large."

One goes his way and hears no more. But on the following Sunday, as he is on the way to Saint-Germain, two young women enter the same railway carriage. He recognizes one of them at once; it is Julia's enemy. The other is—Julia!

And there are endearments, caresses, plans. "Now, Julia—listen, Julia," and so on.

The girl-man has friendships of this kind. For three months he cannot bear to leave his old Jack, his dear Jack. There is no one but Jack in the world. He is the only one who has any intelligence, any sense, any talent. He alone amounts to anything in Paris. One meets them everywhere together; they dine together, walk about in company, and every evening walk home with each other, back and forth, without being able to part.

Three months later, if Jack is mentioned, we hear:

"There is a drinker, a sorry fellow, a scoundrel for you! I knew him well, you may be sure. He is not even honest; he is ill-bred," etc., etc.

Three months later they are living together! But one morning one hears that they have fought a duel, then embraced each other amid tears on the dueling ground.

Just now they are the dearest friends in the world, furious with each other half the year, abusing and loving each other by turns, squeezing each other's hands till they almost crush the bones, and ready to run each other through the body for a misunderstanding.

For the relations of these effeminate men are uncertain. Their temper comes by fits and starts; their delight is unexpected; their affection fluctuates; their enthusiasm is subject to eclipse. One day they love you, the next day they will hardly look at you, for they have, in fact, a girl's nature, a girl's charm, a girl's temperament, and all their sentiments are like the affection of girls.

They treat their friends as women treat their pet dogs.

It is the dear little *tonton,* whom they hug, feed with sugar, allow to sleep on the pillow, but which they would be just as likely to throw out of the window in a moment of impatience, which they turn round like a sling, holding it by the tail, squeeze in their arms till they almost strangle it, and plunge without any reason into a pail of cold water.

Then what a strange thing it is when one of these beings falls in love with a real girl! He beats her; she scratches him; they execrate each other, cannot bear the sight of each other, and yet cannot part, linked together by no one knows what mysterious psychic bonds. She deceives him; he knows it, sobs, and forgives her. He despises and adores her, without seeing that she would be justified in despising him. They are both atrociously unhappy and yet cannot separate. They cast invectives, reproaches, and abominable accusations at each other from morning till night; and when they have reached the climax, and are vibrating with rage and hatred, they fall into each other's arms and kiss each other ardently.

The girl-man is brave and a coward at the same time. He has more than another the exalted sentiment of honor, but is lacking in the sense of sim-

ple honesty, and, circumstances favoring him, would defalcate and commit infamies which do not trouble his conscience, for he obeys, without questioning, the oscillation of his ideas, which are always impulsive.

To him it seems permissible and almost right to cheat a haberdasher. He does not consider it dishonorable not to pay his debts, unless they are gambling debts. He dupes people whenever the laws of society admit of his doing so. When he is short of money he borrows in all ways, not always being scrupulous as to tricking the lenders, but he would with sincere indignation run his sword through any one who should suspect him only of lacking in delicacy or politeness.

THE MUSTACHE

CHÂTEAU DE SOLLES,

July 30, 1883.

MY DEAR LUCY: I have no news. We live in the drawing-room, looking out at the rain. We cannot go out in this frightful weather, so we have theatricals. How stupid they are, my dear, these drawing-room entertainments in the repertory of real life! All is forced, coarse, heavy. The jokes are like cannon-balls, smashing everything in their passage. No wit, nothing natural, no sprightliness, no elegance. These literary men, in truth, know nothing of society. They are perfectly ignorant of how people think and talk in our set. I do not mind if they despise our customs, our conventionalities, but I do not forgive them for not knowing them. When they wish to be humorous they make puns that would do for a barrack; when they try

to be jolly they give us jokes that they must have picked up on the outer boulevard, in those beer-houses that artists are supposed to frequent, where one has heard the same students' jokes for fifty years.

So we have taken to theatricals. As we are only two women, my husband takes the part of a soubrette, and, in order to do that, he has shaved off his mustache. You cannot imagine, my dear Lucy, how it changes him! I no longer recognize him—by day or at night. If he did not let it grow again I think I should no longer love him, he looks so horrid like this.

In fact, a man without a mustache is no longer a man. I do not care much for a beard; it almost always makes a man look untidy. But a mustache —oh, a mustache is indispensable to a manly face! No, you never would believe how those little bristles on the upper lip are a relief to the eye and good in other ways. I have thought over the matter a great deal, but hardly dare to write my thoughts. Words look so different on paper, and the subject is so difficult, so delicate, so dangerous, that it requires infinite skill to broach it.

Well, when my husband appeared shaven, I understood at once that I never could fall in love with a strolling actor nor a preacher, even if it were Father Didon, the most charming of all! Later, when I was alone with him (my husband) it was worse still. Oh, my dear Lucy, never let yourself be kissed by a man without a mustache; their kisses have no flavor, none whatever! They no longer have the charm, the mellowness, and the—yes, the piquancy of a real kiss. The mustache lends the spice.

Imagine placing to your lips a piece of dry—or moist—parchment. That is the kiss of the man without a mustache. It is not worth while.

Whence comes this charm of the mustache, will you tell me? Do I know myself? It tickles your face, you feel it approaching your mouth, and it sends a little shiver through you down to the tips of your toes.

And on your neck! Have you ever felt a mustache on your neck? It intoxicates you, makes you feel creepy, goes to the tips of your fingers. You wriggle, shake your shoulders, toss back your head. You wish to get away and at the same time to remain there; it is delightful, but irritating. But how sweet it is!

A lip without a mustache is like a body without clothing; and one must wear clothes—very few, if you like—but still some clothing.

I recall a sentence (uttered by a politician) which has been running in my mind for three months. My husband, who keeps up with the newspapers, read me one evening a very singular speech by our Minister of Agriculture, who was called M. Méline. He may have been superseded by this time—I do not know.

I was paying no attention, but the name, Méline, struck me. It recalled, I do not exactly know why, the *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*. I thought it was about some grisette. That shows how scraps of the speech entered my mind. This M. Méline was making this statement to the people of Amiens, I believe, and I have ever since been trying to understand what he meant: "There is no patriotism without agriculture!" Well, I have just discovered his meaning; and I affirm in my turn that there

is no love without a mustache. When you say it that way it sounds comical, does it not?

There is no love without a mustache!

"There is no patriotism without agriculture," said M. Méline, and he was right, that Minister. I now understand why.

From a very different point of view, the mustache is essential. It gives character to the face. It makes a man look gentle or tender, violent or a monster, a rake or enterprising! The hairy man who does not shave his beard never has a refined look, for his features are concealed; and the shape of the jaw and the chin betray a great deal to those who understand.

The man with a mustache retains his own peculiar expression and his refinement.

And how many different varieties of mustaches there are! Sometimes they are twisted, curled, coquettish. Those seem to be devoted chiefly to women.

Sometimes they are pointed, sharp as needles, and threatening. That kind prefers wine, horses, and war.

Sometimes they are enormous, overhanging, frightful. These big ones usually conceal a fine disposition, a kindliness that borders on weakness, and a gentleness that savors of timidity.

But what I adore above all in the mustache is the fact that it is French, altogether French. It came from our ancestors, the Gauls, and has remained the insignia of our national character.

It is boastful, gallant, and brave. It sips wine gracefully and knows how to laugh with refinement; while the broad, bearded jaws are clumsy in everything they do.

I recall something that made me weep bitter tears, and also—I see it now—made me love a mustache on a man's face.

It was during the war, when I was living with my father. I was a young girl then. One day there was a skirmish near the château. I had heard the firing of cannon and artillery all the morning, and that evening a German colonel came and took up his abode in our house. He left the following day. My father was informed that there were several dead bodies in the fields. He had them brought to our place so that they might be buried together. They were laid all along the great avenue of pines as fast as they brought them in, on both sides of the avenue, and as they began to smell unpleasant their bodies were covered with earth until the deep trench could be dug. Thus one saw only their heads, which seemed to protrude from the clayed earth and were almost as yellow, with their closed eyes.

I wanted to see them. But when I saw those two rows of frightful faces I thought I should faint. However, I began to look at them, one by one, trying to guess what kind of men these had been.

The uniforms were concealed beneath the earth, and yet, immediately, yes, immediately, my dear, I recognized the Frenchmen by their mustaches!

Some of them had shaved on the very day of the battle, as if they wished to be elegant up to the last; others seemed to have a week's growth; but all wore the French mustache, very plain, the proud mustache that seems to say: "Do not take me for my bearded friend, little one; I am a brother."

And I cried, oh, I cried a great deal more than

I should if I had not recognized them, the poor dead fellows!

It is wrong of me to tell you this. Now, I am sad and cannot chatter any longer. Well, good-by, dear Lucy; I send you a hearty kiss. Long live the mustache!

JEANNE.

A STROLL

WHEN Old Man Leras, bookkeeper for Messieurs Labuze and Company, left the store, he stood for a minute bewildered at the glory of the setting sun. He had worked all day in the yellow light of a small jet of gas, far in the back of the store, on a narrow court, as deep as a well. The little room where he had been spending his days for forty years was so dark that even in the middle of summer one could only go without the gaslight from eleven until three.

It was always damp and cold, and from this hole on which his window opened came the musty odor of a sewer.

For forty years Monsieur Leras had been arriving every morning in this prison at eight o'clock, and he would remain there until seven at night, bending over his books, writing with the application of a good clerk.

He was now making three thousand francs a year, having started at fifteen hundred. He had

remained a bachelor, as his means had not allowed him the luxury of a wife, and as he had never enjoyed anything, he desired nothing. From time to time, however, tired of his continuous and monotonous work, he formed a platonic wish: "Gad! If I only had an income of fifteen thousand francs, I would take life easy."

He had never taken life easy, as he had never had anything but his monthly salary. His life had been uneventful, without emotions, without hopes. The faculty of dreaming with which every one is blessed had never developed in the mediocrity of his ambitions.

When he was twenty-one he entered the employ of Messieurs Labuze and Company. And he had never left them.

In 1856 he had lost his father, and then his mother in 1859. Since then the only incident in his life was when he moved, in 1868, because his landlord had tried to raise his rent.

Every day his alarm clock made him jump out of bed at exactly six, with a frightful noise of rattling chains.

Twice, however, this piece of mechanism had been out of order. Once in 1866 and again in 1874; he had never been able to find out the reason why. He would dress, make his bed, sweep his room, dust his chair and the top of his bureau. All this took him an hour and a half.

Then he would go out, buy a roll at the Lahure Bakery, in which he had seen eleven different owners without the name ever changing, and he would eat this roll on the way to the office.

His entire existence had been spent in the narrow, dark office, which was still decorated with the

same wall paper. He had entered there as a young man, as assistant to Monsieur Brument, and with the desire to replace him.

He had taken his place and wished for nothing more.

The whole harvest of memories which other men reap in their span of years, the unexpected events, sweet or tragic loves, adventurous journeys, all the occurrences of a free existence, all these things had remained unknown to him.

Days, weeks, months, seasons, years, all were alike to him. He got up every day at the same hour, started out, arrived at the office, ate luncheon, went away, had dinner, and went to bed without ever interrupting the regular monotony of similar actions, deeds, and thoughts.

Formerly he used to look at his blond mustache and wavy hair in the little round mirror left by his predecessor. Now, every evening before leaving, he would look at his white mustache and bald head in the same mirror. Forty years had rolled by, long and rapid, dreary as a day of sadness and as similar as the hours of a nightmare! Forty years of which nothing remained, not even a memory, not even a misfortune, since the death of his parents. Nothing.

That day Monsieur Leras stood by the door, dazzled at the brilliancy of the setting sun; and instead of returning home he decided to take a little stroll before dinner, a thing which happened to him four or five times a year.

He reached the boulevards, where people were streaming along under the green trees. It was a spring evening, one of those first warm and pleasant evenings which fill the heart with the joy of life.

Monsieur Leras went along with his mincing old man's step; he was going along with joy in his heart, at peace with the world. He reached the Champs-Elysées, and he continued to walk, enlivened at the sight of the young people trotting along.

The whole sky was aflame; the Arc de Triomphe stood out against the brilliant background of the horizon, like a giant surrounded by fire. As he approached the gigantic monument, the old bookkeeper noticed that he was hungry, and he went into a wine dealer's for dinner.

The meal was served in front of the store, on the sidewalk; it consisted of some mutton, salad, and asparagus; it was the best dinner that Monsieur Leras had had in a long time. He washed down his cheese with a small bottle of burgundy, had his after-dinner cup of coffee, a thing which he rarely took, and finally a little pony of brandy.

When he had paid he felt quite youthful, even a little moved. And he said to himself: "What a fine evening! I will continue my stroll as far as the entrance to the Bois de Boulogne. It will do me good."

He set out. An old tune which one of his neighbors used to sing kept returning to his mind. He kept on humming it over and over again. A hot, still night had fallen over Paris. Monsieur Leras was following along the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne and watching the cabs drive by. They kept coming with their shining lights, one behind the other, giving him a glimpse of the couples inside, the women in their light dresses and the men dressed in black.

It was one long procession of lovers, riding un-

der the warm, starlit sky. They kept on coming in rapid succession. They passed by in the carriages, pressed against each other, lost in their dreams, in the emotion of desire, in the anticipation of the approaching embrace. The warm shadows seemed to be full of floating kisses. A sensation of tenderness filled the air. All these embracing couples, all these people intoxicated with the same idea, with the same thought, made the atmosphere around them feverish.

At last Monsieur Leras grew a little tired of walking, and he sat down on a bench to watch these carriages pass by with their burdens of love. Almost immediately a woman walked up to him and said: "Good evening, papa."

He did not answer, and she continued: "Let me love you, dearie; you'll see how nice I can be."

He answered: "Madame, you are mistaken."

She slipped her arm through his, saying: "Come along, now; don't be foolish, listen. . . ."

He arose and walked away, with sadness in his heart. A few yards away another woman walked up to him and asked: "Won't you sit down beside me?"

He said: "What makes you do that?"

She stood before him and in an altered, hoarse, angry voice exclaimed: "Well, it isn't for the fun of it, anyhow!"

He insisted in a gentle voice: "Then what makes you?"

She grumbled: "I've got to live! Foolish question!" And she walked away, humming.

Monsieur Leras stood there bewildered. Other women were passing near him, speaking to him and calling to him. He felt as though he were enveloped in darkness, by something disagreeable.

He sat down again on a bench; the carriages were still rolling by. He thought: "I should have done better not to come here; I feel all upset."

He began to think of all this venal or passionate love, of all these kisses, sold or given, which were passing by in front of him. Love! He scarcely knew it. In his lifetime he had only known two or three women, his means forcing him to live a quiet life, and he looked back at the life which he had led, so different from everybody else, so dreary, so mournful, so empty.

Some people are really unfortunate. And suddenly, as though a veil had been torn from his eyes, he perceived the infinite misery, the monotony of his existence: the past, present, and future misery; his last day similar to his first one, with nothing before him, behind him or about him, nothing in his heart or any place.

The stream of carriages was still going by. In the rapid passage of the open cab he still saw the two silent and embracing creatures. It seemed to him that the whole of humanity was flowing on before him, intoxicated with joy, pleasure, and happiness. He alone was looking on. To-morrow he would again be alone, always alone, more so than any one else. He stood up, took a few steps, and suddenly he felt as tired as though he had taken a long journey on foot, and he sat down on the next bench.

What was he waiting for? What was he hoping for? Nothing. He was thinking of how pleasant it must be in old age to return home and find the little children. It is pleasant to grow old when one is surrounded by those beings who owe their life to you, who love you, who caress you, who tell you

charming and foolish little things which warm your heart and console you for everything.

And, thinking of his empty room, clean and sad, where no one but himself ever entered, a feeling of distress filled his soul; and the place seemed to him more mournful even than his little office. Nobody ever came there; no one ever spoke in it. It was dead, silent, without the echo of a human voice. It seems as though the walls retain something of the people who live within them, something of their manner, face and voice. The houses inhabited by happy families are gayer than the dwellings of the unfortunate. His room was as barren of memories as his life. And the thought of returning to this place, all alone, of getting into his bed, of doing over again all the movements and actions of every evening, this thought terrified him. As though to escape farther from this sinister home, and from the time when he would have to return to it, he arose and walked out on the grass behind the bushes.

About him, above him, everywhere, he heard the continuous, immense, confused rumble, composed of countless and different noises, a vague and great palpitation of life: the breath of Paris, breathing like a giant.

The sun was already shedding a flood of light on the Bois de Boulogne. Several carriages were beginning to drive about, and people were appearing on horseback.

A couple was walking through a deserted alley. Suddenly the young woman raised her eyes and saw something brown in the branches. Surprised and anxious, she raised her hand, exclaiming: "Look! what is that?"

Then she shrieked and fell into the arms of her

companion, who was forced to place her on the ground.

The policeman who had been called took down an old man who had hung himself with his suspenders.

Examination showed that he had died on the evening before. The papers found on him showed that he was a bookkeeper with Messieurs Labuze and Company, and that his name was Leras.

The death was attributed to suicide, the cause of which could not be suspected. Perhaps a sudden access of madness!

THE DOOR

"AH!" exclaimed Karl Massouligny, "the question of complaisant husbands is a difficult one. I have seen many kinds, and yet I am unable to give an opinion about any of them. I have often tried to determine whether they are blind, weak, or clairvoyant. I believe that there are some which belong to each of these categories that I have mentioned.

"Let us quickly pass over the blind ones. They cannot rightly be called complaisant, since they do not know, but they are good creatures who cannot see farther than their nose. It is a curious and interesting thing to notice the ease with which men and women can be deceived. We are taken in by the slightest trick of those who surround us. Of our children, our friends, our servants, our tradespeople. Humanity is credulous, and in order to discover deceit of others, we do not display one-

tenth the finesse which we use when we, in turn, wish to deceive some one else.

" The clairvoyant husbands can be divided into three classes. Those who have some interest, pecuniary, ambitious or otherwise, in their wife's having a lover, or lovers. These ask only to safeguard appearances as near as possible, and they are satisfied.

" Next come those who get angry. What a beautiful novel one could write about them!

" Finally the weak ones! Those who are afraid of scandal.

" There are also those who are powerless, or, rather, tired, who escape the conjugal bed from fear of ataxia or apoplexy, who are satisfied to see a friend run these risks.

" But I have met a husband of a rare species, and who guarded against the common accident in a strange and witty manner.

" In Paris I had made the acquaintance of an elegant, fashionable couple. The woman, nervous, tall, slender, courted, was supposed to have had many adventures. She pleased me with her wit, and I believe that I pleased her, also. I courted her, a trial courting to which she answered with evident provocations. Soon we arrived at the edge of tender glances, pressures of the hands, all the little gallantries which precede the great attack.

" Nevertheless, I hesitated. I believe that, as a rule, the majority of society intrigues, however short they may be, are not worth the trouble which they give us and the difficulties which may arise. I therefore mentally compared the advantages and disadvantages which I could expect, and I thought that the husband suspected me.

" One evening, at a ball, as I was saying tender things to the young woman in a little parlor leading from the big hall where the dancing was going on, I noticed in a mirror the reflection of some one who was watching us. It was he. Our looks met and then I saw him turn his head and walk away.

" I murmured: ' Your husband is spying on us.'

" She seemed dumfounded, and asked: ' My husband? '

" ' Yes, he has been watching us for some time.'

" ' Nonsense! Are you sure? '

" ' Very sure.'

" ' How strange! He is usually very pleasant with all my friends.'

" ' Perhaps he guessed that I love you! '

" ' Nonsense! You were not the first one to pay attention to me. Every woman who is a little in view drags behind her a herd of sighers.'

" ' Yes. But I love you deeply.'

" ' Admitting that that is true, does a husband ever guess those things? '

" ' Then he is not jealous? '

" ' No—no! '

" She thought for an instant, and then continued: ' No. I do not think that I ever noticed any jealousy on his part.'

" ' Has he never—watched you? '

" ' No. As I said, he is always agreeable to my friends.'

" From that day my courting became much more assiduous. The woman did not please me any more than before, but the probable jealousy of her husband tempted me greatly.

" As for her, I judged her coolly and clearly.

She had a certain worldly charm, due to a quick, gay, amiable, and superficial mind, but no real, deep attraction. She was, as I have already said, a little nervous, and quite elegant. How can I explain myself? It was . . . a decoration, not a home.

"One day, after taking dinner with her, her husband said to me, just as I was leaving: 'My dear friend' (he now called me 'friend'), 'we soon leave for the country. It is a great pleasure for my wife and myself to receive the people whom we like. We would like to have you spend a month with us. It would be very nice of you to do so.'

"I was dumfounded, but I accepted.

"A month later I arrived at their estate of Vertcresson, in Touraine. They were waiting for me at the station, five miles from the château. There were three of them, she, the husband, and a gentleman unknown to me, the Comte de Morterade, to whom I was introduced. He appeared to be delighted to make my acquaintance, and the strangest ideas passed through my mind while we trotted along the beautiful road between two hedges. I was saying to myself: 'Let's see, what can this mean? Here is a husband who cannot doubt that his wife and I are on more than

friendly terms, and yet he invites me to his house, receives me like an old friend, and seems to say: "Go ahead, my friend, the road is clear!"

"'Then I am introduced to a very pleasant gentleman, who seems already to have settled down in the house, and . . . and who is perhaps trying to get out of it, and who seems as pleased at my arrival as the husband himself.

"'Is it some former lover who wishes to retire? One might think so. But, then, would these two men tacitly have come to one of these infamous little agreements so common in society? And it is proposed to me that I should quietly enter into the association and take up the continuation of it. All hands and arms are held out to me. All doors and hearts are open to me.

"'And what about her? An enigma. She cannot be ignorant of everything. However? . . . however? . . . that's it. I understand nothing.'

"The dinner was very gay and cordial. On leaving the table the husband and his friend began to play cards, while I went out on the porch to look at the moonlight with Madame. She seemed to be greatly moved by nature, and I judged that the moment for my happiness was near. That evening she was really delightful. The country had seemed to make her more tender. Her long slender waist looked pretty on this stone porch beside a great vase in which grew some flowers. I felt like dragging her out under the trees, throwing myself at her feet, and speaking to her words of love.

"Her husband's voice called: 'Louise?'

"'Yes, my dear.'

"'You are forgetting the tea.'

"'I will have it brought, my friend.'

" We returned to the house, and she served us with tea. When the two men had finished playing cards, they were visibly tired. I had to go to my room. I did not get to sleep till late, and then I slept badly.

" An excursion was decided upon for the following afternoon, and we went in an open carriage to visit some ruins. She and I were in the back of the vehicle and they were opposite us, riding backward. The conversation was sympathetic and agreeable. I am an orphan, and it seemed to me as though I had just found my family, I felt so at home with them.

" Suddenly, as she had stretched out her foot between her husband's feet, he murmured reproachfully: ' Louise, please don't use up your old shoes yourself. There is no reason for being neater in Paris than in the country.'

" I lowered my eyes. She was indeed wearing worn-out shoes, and I noticed that her stockings were not pulled up tightly.

" She had blushed and hidden her foot under her dress. The friend was looking out in the distance, with an indifferent and unconcerned look.

" The husband offered me a cigar, which I accepted. For a few days it was impossible for me to be alone with her for two minutes; he was with us everywhere. He was delightful to me.

" One morning he came to get me to take a walk before breakfast, and the conversation happened to turn to marriage. I spoke a little about solitude, and about how charming life can be made by a woman. Suddenly he interrupted me, saying: ' My friend, don't talk about things you know nothing about. A woman who has no more reason for lov-

ing you will not love you for a long time. All the little coquetries which make 'them so exquisite when they do not definitely belong to us cease as soon as they become ours. And then . . . the respectable women . . . that is to say, our wives . . . are . . . are not . . . quite . . . do not understand their profession of wife. Do you understand? '

" He said no more, and I could not guess his thoughts.

" Two days after this conversation he called me to his room quite early in order to show me a collection of engravings. I sat in an easy-chair opposite the big door which separated his apartment from his wife's, and behind this door I heard some one walking and moving, and I was thinking very little of the engravings, although I kept exclaiming: ' Oh, charming! delightful! exquisite! '

" He suddenly said: ' Oh! I have a beautiful specimen in the next room. I'll go get it.'

" He ran to the door quickly, and both sides opened as though for a theatrical effect.

" In a large room, all in disorder, in the midst of skirts, collars, waists lying around on the floor, stood a tall, dried-up creature. The lower part of her body was covered with an old, worn-out silk petticoat, which was hanging limply on her shapeless form, and she was standing in front of a mirror brushing some short, sparse blond hairs. Her arms formed two acute angles, and as she turned around in astonishment I saw under a common cotton chemise a regular cemetery of ribs, usually hidden from the public gaze by well-arranged pads.

" The husband uttered a natural cry and came back, closing the doors, and said: ' Gracious! how

stupid I am! Oh, how thoughtless! My wife will never forgive me for that! '

" I already felt like thanking him. I left three days later, after cordially shaking hands with the two men and kissing the lady's fingers; she bade me a cold good-by."

Karl Massouligny was silent. Some one asked: " But what was the friend? "

" I don't know . . . however . . . however, he looked greatly distressed to see me leaving so soon."

THE NIGHT OF THE WEDDING

FOR a long time Jacques Bourdillère had sworn that he would never marry; but he suddenly changed his mind. It happened suddenly, one summer, at the seashore.

One morning, as he lay stretched out on the sand, watching the women coming out of the water, a little foot had struck him by its neatness and daintiness. He looked up higher and was delighted with the whole person. By the way, he could see nothing but the ankles and the head emerging from a flannel bathrobe carefully held closed. He was supposed to be sensual and a fast liver. It was, therefore, only through the graceful form that he was at first captured; then he was held by the charm of the young girl's sweet mind, so simple and good, as fresh as her cheeks and lips.

He was presented to the family and pleased them; he immediately fell madly in love. When he would see Berthe Lannis in the distance, on the long

yellow stretch of sand, he would tingle to the roots of his hair. When he was near her he would become silent, unable to speak or even to think, with a kind of bubbling in his heart, of buzzing in his ears, and of bewilderment in his mind. Was that love?

He did not know or understand, but he had fully decided to have this child for his wife.

Her parents hesitated for a long time, restrained by the young man's bad reputation. It was said that he had an old sweetheart, one of these binding attachments which one always believes to be broken off and yet which always hold.

Besides, for a shorter or longer period, he loved every woman who came within reach of his lips.

Then he settled down and refused, even once, to see the one with whom he had lived for so long. A friend took care of this woman's pension and assured her an income. Jacques paid, but he did not even wish to hear of her, pretending even to ignore her name. She wrote him letters which he never opened. Every week he would recognize the clumsy writing of the abandoned woman, and every week a greater anger surged within him against her, and he would quickly tear the envelope and the paper, without opening it, without reading one single line, knowing in advance the reproaches and complaints which it contained.

As but little faith existed in his constancy, the test was prolonged through the winter, and Berthe's hand was not granted him until the spring. The wedding took place in Paris at the beginning of May.

The young couple had decided not to take the conventional wedding trip; but after a little dance

for the younger cousins, which would not be prolonged after eleven o'clock in order that this day of lengthy ceremonies might not be too tiresome, the young pair were to spend the first night in the parental home and then, on the following morning, to leave for the beach so dear to their hearts where they had known and loved each other.

Night had come, and the dance was going on in the large parlor. The two had retired to a little Japanese boudoir, hung with bright silks and dimly lighted by the soft rays of a large colored lantern hanging from the ceiling like a gigantic egg. Through the open window the fresh air from outside passed over their faces like a caress, for the night was warm and calm, full of the odor of spring.

They were saying nothing to each other; they were holding each other's hands, and from time to time squeezing them with all their might. She sat there with a dreamy look, feeling a little lost by this great change in her life, but smiling, moved, ready to cry, often, also, ready almost to faint from joy, believing the whole world to be changed by what had just happened to her, nervous she knew not why, and feeling her whole body and soul filled by an indefinable and delicious lassitude.

He was looking at her persistently with a fixed smile. He wished to speak, but found nothing to say, and so sat there, putting all his ardor in pressures of the hand. From time to time he would murmur: "Berthe!" And each time she would raise her eyes to him with a look of tenderness; they would look at each other for a second, and then her look, pierced and fascinated by his, would fall.

They found no thoughts to exchange. They had been left alone, but occasionally some of the dancers

would cast a rapid glance at them, as though they were the discreet and trusting witnesses of a mystery.

A door opened and a servant entered, holding on a tray a letter which a messenger had just brought. Jacques, trembling, took this paper, overwhelmed by a vague and sudden fear, the mysterious terror of swift misfortune.

He looked for a long time at the envelope, the writing on which he did not know, not daring to open it, not wishing to read it, with a wild desire to put it in his pocket and say to himself: "I'll leave that till to-morrow, when I'm far away!" But on one corner two words stared at him: "*Very urgent,*" filling him with terror. Saying: "Please excuse me, my dear," he tore open the envelope. He read the paper, grew frightfully pale, looked over it again, and, slowly, he seemed to spell it out word for word.

When he raised his head his whole face was upset. He stammered: "My dear, it . . . it's from my best friend, who has had a very great misfortune. He has need of me immediately . . . for a matter of life or death. Will you excuse me if I leave you for half an hour? I'll be right back."

Trembling and dazed, she stammered: "Go then, my dear!" not yet having been his wife long enough to dare to question him, to demand to know. He disappeared. She remained alone, listening to the dancing in the neighboring parlor.

He had seized up the first hat and coat he came to and jumped down the stairs three at a time. As he was emerging into the street he stopped under the gas-jet of the vestibule and re-read the letter. This is what it said:

"SIR: A girl by the name of Ravet, an old sweetheart of yours, it seems, has just given birth to a child whom she claims to be yours. The mother is about to die and is begging for you. I take the liberty to write and ask you if you can grant this last request to a woman who seems to be very unhappy and worthy of pity. Yours truly,

"DR. BONNARD."

When he reached the sick-room the woman was already on the point of death. He did not recognize her at first. The doctor and two nurses were taking care of her. And everywhere on the floor were pails full of ice and rags covered with blood. Water flooded the carpet; two candles were burning on a bureau; behind the bed, in a little wicker crib, the child was crying, and each time it would moan the mother, in torture, would try to move, shivering under her ice bandages.

She was wounded to death by this birth. Her life was flowing from her; and, notwithstanding the ice and the care, the merciless hemorrhage continued, hastening her last hour.

She recognized Jacques, and wished to raise her arms. They were so weak that she could not, but down her pallid cheeks coursed tears.

He dropped to his knees beside the bed, seized one of her hands, and kissed it frantically; then, little by little, he drew nearer to the thin face, which started at the contact. One of the nurses was lighting them with a candle, and the doctor was watching them from the back of the room.

Then she said, in a voice which sounded as though it came from a distance: "I am going to die, dear; promise to stay to the end. Oh! don't leave me now. Don't leave me at the last minute!"

He kissed her face and her hair, and, weeping, he murmured: "Never fear, I will stay."

It was several minutes before she could speak again, she was so weak. She continued: "The little one is yours. I swear it before God and on my soul. I swear it as I am dying! I have never loved another man but you—promise to take care of the child."

He was trying to take this poor pain-racked body in his arms. Maddened by remorse and sorrow, he stammered: "I swear to you that I will bring him up and love him. He shall never leave me."

Then she tried to kiss Jacques. Powerless to lift her head, she held out her white lips in an appeal for a kiss. He approached his lips to pluck this poor caress.

As soon as she felt a little calmer, she murmured: "Bring him here, and let me see if you love him."

He went and got the child. He placed him gently on the bed between them, and the little one stopped crying. She murmured: "Don't move any more!" And he was quiet. And he stayed there, holding in his burning hand this other one shaken by the shivers of death, just as, a while ago, he had been holding a hand trembling with love. From time to time he would cast a quick glance at the clock, which marked midnight, then one o'clock, then two.

The physician had returned; the two nurses, after noiselessly moving around through the room for a while, were now sleeping on chairs. The child was sleeping, and the mother, with eyes shut, appeared also to be resting.

Suddenly, just as pale daylight was creeping in behind the curtains, she stretched out her arms with such a quick and violent motion that she almost threw her baby on the floor. A kind of rattle was heard in her throat, then she lay on her back motionless, dead.

The nurses sprang forward and declared: "All is over!"

He looked once more at this woman whom he had so loved, then at the clock, which pointed to four, and he ran away, forgetting his overcoat, in evening dress, with the child in his arms.

After she had been left alone, the young wife had waited, calmly enough at first, in the little Japanese boudoir. Then, as she did not see him return, she went back to the parlor with an indifferent and calm appearance, but terribly anxious. When her mother saw her alone she asked: "Where is your husband?" She answered: "In his room; he is coming back soon."

After an hour, when everybody had questioned her, she told about the letter, Jacques's upset appearance, and her fears of an accident.

Still they waited. The guests left; only the nearest relatives remained. At midnight the bride was put to bed, all shaken by tears. Her mother and two aunts, sitting around the bed, were listening to her cry, silent and in despair . . . the father had gone to the commissary of police to see if he could obtain some news.

At five o'clock a slight noise was heard in the hall; a door was softly opened and closed; then suddenly a little cry like the mewing of a cat was heard throughout the silent house.

All the women started forward, and Berthe

sprang ahead of them all, pushing her way past her aunts, wrapped in a bathrobe.

Jacques stood in the middle of the room, pale and panting, holding an infant in his arms. The four women looked at him, astonished; but Berthe, who had suddenly become courageous, rushed forward with anguish in her heart, exclaiming: "What is it? What's the matter?"

He looked around wildly and answered shortly: "I—I have a child, and the mother has just died. . . ." And in his clumsy hands he held out the howling infant.

Without saying a word, Berthe seized the child, kissed it, and hugged it to her; then she raised her tear-filled eyes to him, asking: "Did you say that the mother was dead?" He answered: "Yes—in my arms . . . I had broken with her since summer . . . I knew nothing. The physician sent for me."

Then Berthe murmured: "Well, we will bring up the little one."

THE REVENGE

THE little Baroness de la Grangerie was slumbering on her sofa when the little Marquise de Rennedou entered quickly, with an excited appearance, her waist a little rumpled, her hat slightly awry, and she fell into a chair, exclaiming: "Oof! That's over!"

Her friend, who knew her to be ordinarily calm and gentle, sat up in surprise, and asked: "What? What have you done?"

The Marquise, who seemed to be unable to stay in one place, stood up and began to walk around the room, then she threw herself down at the foot of the sofa where her friend was resting and took her hands, saying: "Listen, dear; swear to me never to repeat what I shall tell you!"

"I swear."

"On all that you hold holy!"

"On all that I hold holy."

"Well, I have just taken vengeance on Simon."

The other exclaimed: "Oh! you certainly did well."

"Didn't I, though? Why, for the last six months he has been even more unbearable than formerly. When I married him I knew that he was homely, but I thought that he was kind. How mistaken I was! He undoubtedly thought that I loved him for himself, with his big stomach and his red nose, for he began to coo like a turtle-dove. As you can imagine, it made me laugh; from that time I called him 'Pigeon.'

"Really, men have funny ideas about themselves. When he understood that the only sentiment which I had for him was friendliness, he became suspicious, he began to say mean things about me, to call me a coquette, a sly person, I know not what. And then things became worse after . . . after . . . it's very hard to explain what I mean. . . . Well, he was very much in love with me . . . very much so . . . and he proved it to me often . . . too often. Oh! my dear, what torture to be . . . loved by a grotesque man. . . . No, really, I couldn't any longer . . . it was like having a tooth pulled out every evening . . . even worse; just imagine some one of your acquaintance who is very ugly, very ridiculous, very repulsive, with an enormous stomach . . . that's the worst part of it . . . and big, fat, hairy legs. You see what I mean, don't you? Well, just imagine that that person is your husband . . . and that . . . you understand. Oh! It's odious! Perfectly odious! . . . Positively, it—it made me ill—it actually gave me nausea. Really, this

couldn't go on any longer. There ought to be some law to protect women in such a case.

"It's not because I have dreamed of poetic love; no, I never did that. It is no longer to be found. All the men nowadays are grooms or bankers; they only love either horses or money, and if they love women it's the same way that they love horses; it is to show them off in their homes, just as they parade a beautiful pair of roans. Nothing more. Life is such to-day that sentiment can have no part in it.

"Let us, therefore, live like practical and indifferent women. Interrelations are no longer anything but regular meetings where each time the same things are said. For whom could we have a little affection and tenderness? The men, our men, are usually nothing more than very correct puppets who completely lack all intelligence and delicacy. If we look for a little wit, as one looks for water in the desert, we draw to us all the artists, and then we are surrounded by unbearable posers or ill-bred bohemians. Like Diogenes, I am looking for a man in the whole of Parisian society; but I am already quite sure that I will not find him, and it will not be long before I blow out my lantern. To return to my husband; as it thoroughly upset me to see him enter my room in his bare legs, I employed every means, every possible means, to keep him away and to—to disgust him with me. At first he was furious; then he became jealous; he imagined that I was deceiving him. In the beginning he was satisfied with watching me. He would watch every motion of any man who entered the house; then the persecution began. He followed me everywhere. He employed the most abominable means to surprise me. After that he allowed me to speak with no one.

At a ball he would stand behind me, pushing forward his thick dog's face as soon as I would say a word. He would follow me to the buffet, forbidding me to dance with this one or with that one, or else he would take me away in the middle of a cotillon, making me appear stupid and ridiculous. Then I ceased to go into society.

"In intimate life it became even worse. Just imagine, one day he called me . . . I don't dare say the word, my dear! . . . In the evening he would say to me: 'Well, who was your lover today?' I would cry, and he would be delighted.

"It became even worse than that. Last week he took me to dinner on the Champs Elysées. Fate willed that Baubignac should be sitting at the next table. Then Simon began to crush my feet under the table, and to grunt at me: 'You had an engagement with him; just wait till I get hold of you!' Then, my dear, you can never imagine what he did: he gently drew my hat-pin out and stuck it into my arm. I uttered a shriek. Everybody crowded around us. Then he pretended to be sorry. You understand. Then I decided that I would avenge myself immediately. What would you have done in my place?"

"Why, I should have taken the same position!"

"Well, it's done."

"How?"

"What? Don't you understand?"

"But, my dear . . ."

"Well, yes . . ."

"Yes, what?"

"Just imagine his expression. Can't you see him with his heavy face, his red nose, and his side whiskers, which hang like a dog's ears?"

"Yes."

"And then, think he is as jealous as a cat!"

"Yes."

"Well, I said to myself: 'I'm going to get revenge for myself and for Marie,' for I fully expected to tell you, but only you. Just imagine his expression, and then think that he . . . he . . . he is . . ."

"What . . . you . . . ?"

"But, my dear, for goodness' sake, swear that you never will tell any one! But isn't it funny? . . . Why, from that time he seems to be entirely different! And I can't help laughing . . . all by myself . . . just think of him!"

The Baroness was looking at her friend, and she began to laugh wildly, hysterically, with her hands on her dress, her breath coming short, and leaning forward as if she would fall on her face.

Then the little Marquise also burst out in laughter, and she kept repeating: "Think . . . think of it . . . isn't it funny? . . . Can't you . . . can't you see him? . . . Think of his whiskers! . . . His nose! . . . Isn't it funny? . . . But . . . promise . . . promise never to tell!"

They were almost choking, unable to speak, crying real tears in this delirium of gayety. The Baroness was the first to calm down; and still out of breath, she asked: "Oh! Tell me how it happened . . . tell me . . . it's so . . . so funny! . . ."

But the other one was unable to speak; she kept stammering: "When I had taken my decision . . . I said to myself . . . 'Quickly . . . quickly . . . it must happen right away!' . . . And I . . . I did it to-day . . ."

"To-day! . . ."

"Yes . . . just a while ago . . . and I told Simon to meet me here so that we could have some fun. . . . He is coming . . . shortly! He is coming! . . . Just . . . just . . . just think of it when you look at him!"

The Baroness was panting as if she had been running a race. She continued: "Oh! tell me how you managed it . . . tell me! . . ."

"It's very simple. . . . I said to myself: 'He is jealous of Baubignac; well, Baubignac it shall be. He is as thick as a stone wall, but very honest. He would be incapable of telling anybody.' Then I went to his house after lunch."

"You went to see him? On what pretext?"

"A subscription . . . for the orphans . . ."

"Tell me . . . quick . . . tell me about it . . ."

"He was so surprised at seeing me that he was unable to speak. And then he gave me two louis for my subscription; and then, as I was rising to leave, he asked about my husband; then I pretended to be unable to contain myself any longer, and I told him everything that was on my mind. I even made him out worse than he is! . . . Then Baubignac grew sorry for me, he tried to find some way of helping me . . . and I began to cry . . . as if my heart were broken . . . he tried to comfort me . . . and when I did not grow any calmer, he kissed me . . . I kept repeating: 'Oh! my poor friend! . . . My poor friend!' He kept repeating, 'My poor friend! . . . my poor friend!' . . . And all the time he kept kissing me; and . . . and . . . there!

"After that I grew angry and heaped re-

proaches on him. Oh! I treated him as though he were the last of the last . . . but I felt a mad desire to laugh. I kept thinking of Simon and his whiskers! Just imagine . . . ! Just imagine! I simply couldn't keep my face straight as I was coming here. Just think of it! . . . It's done! . . . Whatever may happen now, it's done! And he was so afraid of that very thing! There may be wars, earthquakes, epidemics, we may all die . . . it's done! Nothing can help that! Think of it when you look at him!"

The Baroness, who was choking, asked: "Do you intend to see Baubignac again?"

"No, indeed! . . . I've had enough of him . . . he would be no better than my husband!"

And both of them began to laugh madly again. The tinkle of a bell interrupted their laughter.

The Marquise murmured: "It's he . . . look at him!"

The door opened. And a fat, red-faced man, with thick lips and hanging whiskers, appeared. He was rolling angry eyes.

The two young women looked at him for a minute, and then they threw themselves down upon the sofa, shaken by a fit of violent laughter.

And he kept repeating angrily: "What's the matter? Are you mad? . . . Are you mad? . . . Are you mad?"

THE WOODCOCKS

MY dear, you ask me why I do not return to Paris; you are surprised and almost angry. The reason which I will give you will probably shock you; does a hunter go to Paris during the season of the woodcocks?

Certainly, I like this city life which extends from the chamber to the sidewalk, but I prefer the free, rough autumn life of the hunter.

In Paris it seems to me as if I were never out of doors; for the streets are really nothing more than great apartments without ceilings. You are not outside when you are between two walls, your feet on the stone or wooden pavement, your view barred everywhere by buildings, without any horizon of pastures, plains, or forests. Thousands of neighbors elbow and push about, bow and speak; and the fact that I get water on my umbrella when it is raining is not sufficient to give me the impression, the sensation of space.

Here I perceive clearly and delightfully the difference between inside and outside . . . but it is not of that that I wish to speak to you. . . .

The woodcocks are here.

I must tell you that I live in a great country house in Normandy, in a valley near a small river, and that I am hunting almost every day.

On other days I read; even things which men in Paris have no time to know, serious, deep, curious things written by a genius, a stranger who has spent his whole life studying the same question, and who has observed facts relative to the influence of the function of our organs on our intelligence.

But I want to tell you of the woodcocks. My two friends, the D'Orgemol brothers, and myself are remaining here throughout the hunting season, waiting for the first cold weather. As soon as there is a frost, we leave for their farm at Cannetot, near Fécamp, because there is there a delightful little forest where dwell all the passing woodcocks.

You know the D'Orgemols, these two giants of early Normandy, these two men of the ancient, conquering race which invaded France, took and kept England, settled along every coast of the old world, built cities everywhere, swept over Sicily and created an admirable art there, defeated all the kings, pillaged all the proud cities, overthrew and outwitted popes, and especially left children in every bed on the earth. The D'Orgemols are two typical Normans; everything about them flavors of Normandy, the voice, the accent, the wit, the blond hair, and the eyes, color of the sea.

When we are together we speak in dialect, we live, think, act like Normans, we become more Norman than our farmers themselves.

Well, we have been expecting the woodcocks for the last two weeks. Every morning the elder brother, Simon, would say to me: "Well, the wind is turning to the east; there is going to be a frost; they'll be here in a couple of days."

The younger brother, Gaspard, more precise, would wait until the frost was there before announcing it.

Last Thursday he came into my room at daybreak, and cried: "It's here! The whole ground is white. Two more days like this and we'll leave for Cannetot."

And, in fact, two days later we were leaving for Cannetot. You certainly would have laughed if you could have seen us. We were traveling in a strange hunting wagon which my father had formerly constructed. "Construct" is the only word which I can use when speaking of this monumental traveler, or, rather, of this rolling earthquake. It contains everything: boxes for provisions, boxes for weapons, for trunks, for everything that is necessary. Everything is under cover except the men, who have to sit on benches as high as a third-story window, and supported by four gigantic wheels. One gets up there as best one can, making use of the feet, hands, and even the teeth, for no step gives access to this edifice.

The two D'Orgemols and myself scramble up on this mountain, dressed like Laplanders. We are wearing sheepskins, thick woolen stockings over our trousers, and gaiters over our stockings; besides this, we wear black fur hats and white fur gloves. When we are settled, Jean, my servant, throws up our three dogs, Pif, Paf, and Mustache. Pif belongs to Simon, Paf to Gaspard, and Mustache to me.

They look like three hairy little crocodiles. They are long, close to the earth, with crooked legs and very hairy. One can hardly see their black eyes under the hair, and their white fangs under their beards. We never shut them up in the rolling kennels of the wagon. We make our dogs lie at our feet, in order to keep ourselves warm. We leave, and get abominably shaken up. The weather was freezing. We were pleased. We arrived at about five. The farmer, Maître Picot, was waiting before the door. He is a strapping fellow, not tall, but short and stocky, as vigorous as a bulldog, as sly as a fox, always smiling, always happy and making money out of everything.

The woodcock season is a great time for him. The farmhouse is a big rambling building, with a yard full of apple trees, and surrounded by four hedges. We go into the kitchen, where a big fire is burning in honor of our arrival.

The table is set near the high fireplace, where everything is cooking; in front of the bright flame is a plump chicken, the gravy from which is dripping into an earthen vessel.

The farmer's wife comes up and treats us. She is a big, silent, very polite woman, always busy with her housekeeping, her head full of business and figures, the price of grain, of poultry, sheep, cattle. She is an orderly and severe woman, known throughout the neighborhood.

In the back of the kitchen is the big table where shortly the servants of every description, truck drivers, laborers, farm girls, shepherds, will sit down; and all these people will eat in silence under the active eye of the mistress, and watch us dine with Maître Picot, who will tell us jokes. Then,

when the employees shall have eaten, Madame Picot will take her frugal meal alone, on a corner of the table, while she watches the maid. On ordinary days she eats with the others.

The D'Orgemols and myself, all three of us, sleep in a large, bare whitewashed room which contains only our three beds, three chairs, and three wash-basins. Gaspard always wakes first, and he rouses the rest of us. In a half hour everybody is ready, and we leave with Maître Picot, who hunts with us.

Maître Picot prefers me to his masters. Why? Doubtless because I am not his master. The two of us reach the woods from the right-hand side, while the two brothers attack it from the left. Simon takes care of the dogs, which he drags along, all three on one leash. For we are not hunting woodcock, but rabbits. We are convinced that one should not hunt woodcock, but find it. You run across it and kill it, that's all. If you try to look for it you will never find it. It is really a beautiful and curious thing to hear, in the fresh morning air, the sharp explosion of the guns, and then Gaspard's stentorian voice fill the air and cry: "Woodcock!"

I am sly. When I have killed a woodcock, I cry: "Rabbit!" And my triumph is double when the game is taken from the bags at noon.

Well, Maître Picot and I are in the little forest, where the leaves are falling with a soft and continuous rustle, a sad, dry noise; they are dead. It is cold, a cold which stings the eyes, the nose and the ears, and which has powdered the grass and the brown ground with a white powder. But under the long sheepskins we feel warm. The sun looks gay in the blue sky; it scarcely warms at all, but it is

gay. How delightful it is to hunt through the woods on a fresh winter's morning!

A dog barks sharply. It is Pif. I know his voice. Then nothing more. I hear a cry, then another; than Paf in turn makes himself heard. What can Mustache be doing? Ah! there he is, clucking like a strangled chicken. They have found a rabbit. They go away, draw nearer, go off again, then return; we follow their unexpected tracks, running along the little paths, our minds alert and our fingers on the trigger.

They go out toward the fields, we follow them. Suddenly a gray shadow crosses the path. I throw my gun to my shoulder and shoot. The light smoke clears off in the blue air, and I see a bundle of white hair kicking about on the grass. Then I bawl at the top of my lungs: "Rabbit! rabbit!" Then I show it to the three dogs, to the three hairy crocodiles, who congratulate me by wagging their tails; then they go to look for another.

Maître Picot had joined me. Mustache began to bark. The farmer said: "It might be a hare; let us go to the edge of the field."

But just as I was leaving the woods I saw, standing right near me, Maître Picot's dumb shepherd, Gargan; he was wrapped in an immense yellow cloak, his head was covered by a woolen bonnet, and he was knitting a stocking. According to the custom, I said: "Good morning, pastor." He raised his hand to greet me, although he had not heard my voice; but he had seen the movement of my lips. I had known this shepherd for fifteen years. For fifteen years I had seen him every autumn standing in the middle or at the edge of a field, his body motionless, and his hands always knitting. His herd

followed him leisurely and seemed to obey his very glances.

Maître Picot pressed my arm, and said: "Did you know that the shepherd killed his wife?"

I was dumfounded, and asked: "What? Gargan? The deaf and dumb one?"

"Yes, last winter. He was tried at Rouen. I'll tell you about it." He dragged me behind the bushes, for the dumb man could gather the words from his master's mouth as though he could hear them. He was the only man that he could understand; but in front of him he was no longer deaf, and the master, on the other hand, could guess like a sorcerer every intention of the dumb man's pantomime, every motion of his fingers, every wrinkle of his face and glance of his eyes.

Here is this simple story, a somber tragedy such as sometimes happens in the country:

Gargan was the son of a marl-digger, one of these men who go down into the marl pits in order to extract this soft, white, crumbling rock, which is then scattered over the fields. He was deaf and dumb at birth, and had been brought up to herd beasts. Then, when Picot's father took him in, he became the shepherd of the farm. He was an excellent shepherd, devoted and honest, and he knew how to heal broken members, although nobody had ever taught him anything about that. When Picot took the farm Gargan was thirty. He was tall and thin, and wore the beard of a patriarch.

At about this time a poor old woman, by the name of Martel, died, leaving a fifteen-year-old girl, who was called "Brandy" on account of her inordinate love for this drink.

Picot took in this girl and employed her to do

little things, feeding her free, in exchange for her work. She would sleep in the carriage house, in the stable, on the straw, or on the dungheap; everywhere and anywhere, with any one, perhaps with the truck driver or with the hodman. But soon she began to be seen regularly in the company of the deaf man. How did these two wretches unite? How did they understand each other? Had he ever known a woman before this one—he who had never spoken to anybody? Was it she who first went to his rolling hut and seduced him, an Eve of the roadside? No one knows. It is only known that one day they began to live together as husband and wife. Nobody was surprised. And Picot even found this quite natural.

But the priest heard of this union without consecration, and grew angry. He reproached Madame Picot, worried her conscience, threatened her with mysterious punishments. What was to be done? It was quite simple. They would be married in the church and by the Mayor. Neither of them had anything: he did not own a whole pair of trousers; she did not have a skirt that hung together. Therefore nothing could stand in the way of satisfying religion and the law. They were united in an hour, before Mayor and priest, and everybody thought that everything was for the best.

But soon it became a regular game throughout the countryside to deceive this poor Gargan. Before they had been married nobody ever thought of going with Brandy, and now everybody wanted her, just as a joke. It only took a glass of brandy to persuade the woman to deceive her husband. The affair had gained such notoriety throughout the neighborhood that gentlemen came from Goderville to

watch the game. For a pint Brandy would give an exhibition with anybody, in a ditch, behind a wall, while at the same time one could see Gargan standing motionless a hundred feet away, knitting his stockings and followed by his bleating herd. And people would laugh themselves sick over the matter in every café of the neighborhood; it was the great topic of conversation. People would greet each other by crying: "Have you treated Brandy?" Everybody knew what that meant.

The shepherd seemed to see nothing. But one day a fellow from Sassedille, by the name of Poirot, called Gargan's wife aside and showed her a full bottle behind a mill. She understood and laughingly came to him. They had hardly begun their criminal business when the shepherd fell upon them as though he had dropped from the clouds. Poirot escaped as best he could, while the dumb man, with animal-like cries, kept squeezing his wife's throat.

The people who had been working in the fields hastened to the scene. It was too late; her tongue was black, her eyes were popping out of her head, and blood was flowing from her nose. She was dead.

The murderer was tried at Rouen. As he was dumb people acted as his interpreters. The details of the affair greatly amused the audience. But the farmer was possessed by only one idea: to have his shepherd acquitted; and he went about the matter in a cunning manner.

He first told the whole of the deaf man's history, and that of his marriage; then he came to the crime and questioned the murderer himself. The whole audience was silent.

Picot asked slowly: "Did you know that she

was deceiving you? " and at the same time he repeated the question with his eyes.

The other answered: " No," with his head.

" Were you sleeping in the mill when you surprised her? " And he made the gesture of a man who sees a disgusting sight.

Then the farmer imitated the motions of the Mayor who marries and the priest who unites in the name of God, and asked his servant if he had killed his wife because she was bound to him before all men and before Heaven.

The shepherd said: " Yes," with his head.

Picot said: " Now, show us how it happened."

Then the deaf man went over the whole scene. He showed how he had been sleeping in the mill, that he had awakened when he felt something moving in the straw, that he had gently looked and had seen the thing.

He was standing between two gendarmes, and suddenly he imitated the motions of the couple before him.

A loud burst of laughter filled the courtroom, then stopped short; for the shepherd, with haggard eyes, was moving his jaws and his great beard as if he were biting something, his arms stretched out, his head shoved forward, repeating the terrible action of the murderer strangling some creature.

And he was howling frightfully, so maddened by anger that he thought that he was holding her again, and the gendarmes were obliged to force him down on a bench in order to calm him.

A thrill of anguish ran through the audience. Then Maître Pîcot placed his hand on his servant's shoulder and said quietly: " This man has honor."

The shepherd was acquitted.

For my part, my dear, I was greatly moved by the last part of this adventure, which I have told you in quite vulgar terms, in order to change nothing of the farmer's story. Suddenly I heard a shot coming from the woods, and Gaspard's rumbling voice came to me like a cannon, crying: "Woodcock!"

And that is how I spend my time watching for the woodcocks, while you go to the Bois to observe the first winter gowns.

THE ABBÉ MARIGNAN

ABBÉ MARIGNAN'S martial name suited him well. He was a tall, thin priest, fanatic, excitable, yet upright. All his beliefs were fixed, never varying. He believed sincerely that he knew his God, penetrated His plans, desires and intentions.

When he walked with long strides through the road of his little country parsonage, he would sometimes ask himself the question: "Why has God done this?" And he would dwell on this mentally, putting himself in the place of God, and he almost invariably found the answer. He would never have cried out in a frenzy of pious humility: "Thy ways, O Lord, are past finding out."

He said to himself: "I am the servant of God; it is right for me to know the reason of His deeds, or to guess it if I do not know it."

Everything in nature seemed to him to have been created in accordance with an admirable and abso-

lute logic. The " whys " and " becauses " always balanced. Dawn was given to make the awakening pleasant, the days to ripen the harvest, the rains to moisten it, the evenings for preparation for slumber, and dark nights for sleep.

The four seasons corresponded perfectly with the needs of agriculture, and no suspicion had ever come to the priest of the fact that nature has no intentions; that, on the contrary, everything which exists must conform to the hard demands of epochs, climates and matter.

But he hated woman—hated her unconsciously, and despised her by instinct. He often repeated the words of Christ: " Woman, what have I to do with thee? " and he would add: " It seems as though God Himself were dissatisfied with this work of His." She was the tempter who had led the first man astray, and who since then had ever been busy with her work of damnation, the feeble creature, dangerous and forever troubling. And even more than their sinful bodies he hated their loving hearts.

He had often felt their tenderness directed toward himself, and though he knew that he was invulnerable, he grew angry at this need of love that is always in them.

According to his belief, God had created woman for the sole purpose of tempting and proving man. One must not approach her without defensive precautions and fear of possible snares. She was, indeed, just like a snare, with her lips open and her arms stretched out to man.

He had no indulgence except for nuns, whom their vows had rendered inoffensive; but he was stern with them, nevertheless, because he felt that at the bottom of their chained and humble hearts the ever-

lasting tenderness was burning brightly—that tenderness which was shown even to him, a priest.

He felt this cursed tenderness even in their docility, in the low tones of their voices, when speaking to him, in their lowered eyes, and in their resigned tears when he reproved them roughly. And he would shake his cassock on leaving the convent doors, and walk off, lengthening his stride as though flying from danger.

He had a niece who lived with her mother in a little house near him. He was bent upon making a sister of charity of her.

She was a pretty, mocking madcap. When the abbé preached she laughed, and when he was angry with her she embraced him tightly, drawing him to her heart, while he sought unconsciously to release himself from this embrace, which nevertheless filled him with a sweet pleasure, awakening in his depths the sensation of paternity which slumbers in every man.

Often, when walking by her side, along the road, between the fields, he spoke to her of God, of his God. She never listened to him, but looked about her at the sky, the grass and flowers, and in her eyes shone the joy of life for everyone to see. At times she would jump forward to catch some flying creature, crying out as she brought it back: "Look, uncle, how pretty it is! I want to hug it!" And this desire to "hug" flies or lilac blossoms disquieted, angered, and roused the priest, who saw, even in this, the ineradicable tenderness that is always budding in women's hearts.

Then there came a day when the sexton's wife, who kept house for Abbé Marignan, told him, with caution, that his niece had a lover.

Almost suffocated by the fearful emotion this news roused in him, he stood there, his face covered with soap, for he was in the act of shaving.

When he had sufficiently recovered to think and speak, he cried: "It is not true; you lie, Mélanie!"

But the peasant woman put her hand on her heart, saying: "May our Lord judge me if I lie, Monsieur le Curé! I tell you, she goes to him every night when your sister has gone to bed. They meet by the river side; you have only to go there and see, between ten o'clock and midnight."

He ceased scraping his chin, and began to walk up and down with heavy steps, as he always did in times of deep meditation. He began shaving again and cut himself three times from his nose to his ear.

All day long he was silent, full of anger and indignation. To his priestly hatred of this invincible love was added the exasperation of her spiritual father, of her tutor and pastor deceived and played with by a child, and the selfish emotion shown by parents when their daughter announces that she has chosen a husband without them and in spite of them.

After dinner he tried to read a little, but could not, growing more and more angry. When ten o'clock struck he seized his cane, a formidable oak stick, which he was accustomed to carry in his nocturnal walks when visiting the sick. And he smiled at the enormous club which he twirled in a threatening manner in his strong, country fist. Then he raised it suddenly and, gritting his teeth, brought it down on a chair, the broken back of which fell over on the floor.

He opened the door to go out, but stopped on the sill, surprised by the splendid moonlight, of such brilliance as is seldom seen.

And, as he was gifted with an emotional nature, one such as all those poetic dreamers, the Fathers of the Church, should have, he felt suddenly distracted and moved by the grand and serene beauty of this pale night.

In his little garden, all bathed in soft light, his fruit trees in a row cast on the ground the shadow of their slim branches, scarcely clothed with verdure, while the giant honeysuckle, clinging to the wall of his house, exhaled a delicious fragrance, filling the clear, warm air with a kind of sweetened, perfumed soul.

He began to take long breaths, drinking in the air as drunkards drink wine, and he walked along slowly, delighted, marveling, almost forgetting his niece.

As soon as he was outside of the garden, he stopped to gaze upon the plain all flooded by the caressing light, bathed in the tender, languishing charm of the serene night. At each moment was heard the short, metallic note of the cricket, and distant nightingales poured out their music note by note—their light, vibrating music that sets one dreaming without thinking, made for kisses, for the seduction of moonlight.

The abbé walked on again, his heart failing, though he knew not why. He seemed weakened, suddenly exhausted; he wanted to sit down, to rest there, to think, to admire God in His works.

Down yonder, following the undulations of the little river, a great line of poplars wound in and out. A fine mist, a white haze that the moonbeams crossed, silvered, and made shining, hung about and over the mountains, enveloping all the tortuous course of the water like a kind of light and transparent cotton.

The priest stopped once again, his soul filled by a growing and irresistible tenderness.

And a doubt, a vague feeling of disquiet came over him; he was asking one of those questions that he sometimes put to himself.

"Why did God make this? Since the night is destined for sleep, unconsciousness, repose, forgetfulness of everything, why make it more charming than day, softer than dawn or evening? And why this seductive planet, more poetic than the sun, that seems destined, so discreet is it, to illuminate things too delicate and mysterious for the great light, that makes so transparent the shadows?

"Why does not the greatest of bird-singers sleep like the others? Why does it pour forth its voice in this mysterious shade?

"Why this half-veil cast over the world? Why these tremblings of the heart, this emotion of the spirit, this languishing of the body? Why this display of seductions that men do not see, since they are lying in their beds? For whom is destined this sublime spectacle, this abundance of poetry cast from heaven to earth?"

And the abbé could not understand.

But see, out there, on the edge of the meadow, under the arch of trees bathed in a shining mist, two figures are walking side by side.

The man was the taller, and held his arm about his sweetheart's neck and kissed her brow every little while. They imparted life to the placid landscape that enveloped them as a frame worthy of them. The two seemed but a single being, the being for whom was destined this calm and silent night, and they came toward the priest as a living answer, the response his Master sent to his query.

He stood still, his heart beating, all upset, and it seemed to him that he was beholding some biblical scene, like the loves of Ruth and Boaz, the accomplishment of the will of the Lord, in one of those glorious stories of which the sacred books tell. The verses of the Song of Songs began to ring in his ears, the cries of ardor, all the poetry of this poem of love.

And he said unto himself: "Perhaps God has made such nights as these to veil the ideal of the love of men."

He shrank back from this couple that still advanced with arms intertwined. Yet it was his niece. But he asked himself now if he would not be disobeying God. And does not God permit love, since He surrounds it with such visible splendor?

And he went back musing, almost ashamed, as if he had penetrated into a temple where he had no right to enter.

ON THE RAILWAY

THE sun was about to disappear behind the great chain of mountains of which the Puy de Dôme is the giant, and the shadow of the peaks stretched into the Valley Royat.

A few persons were walking through the park around the bandstand; others were sitting in groups, notwithstanding the coolness of the evening. In one of these groups the conversation was animated, for the question was one which greatly bothered Mesdames de Sarcagnes, De Vaulacelles, and De Bridoie. Vacations were to begin in a few days, and they had to send for their sons, who were being educated by the Jesuits and the Dominicans.

Now, these ladies had no desire themselves to undertake a journey to fetch their descendants, and they knew of no one to whom they could intrust this delicate mission. It was the end of July. Paris

was empty. They were searching in vain for a name which offered them sufficient guaranty.

Their embarrassment grew when they heard of a great breach of morality which had happened on a railway train a few days previously. And the ladies were positive that all the gay girls of the whole capital spent their lives on the expresses between Auvergne and the Lyons Station. According to M. de Bridoie, of the *Gil Blas,* all these women had gone to Vichy, Mont Doré, and Bourboule. In order to get there they must have gone on the railway, and they would again undoubtedly come back by the same means of transportation; they must probably be going back and forth every day. It was, therefore, a continual coming and going of naughty people on that confounded line. The ladies were most distressed that entrance to the stations should not be forbidden to suspicious women.

Now, Roger de Sarcagnes was fifteen, Gontran de Vaulacelles thirteen, and Roland de Bridoie eleven. What was to be done? They could not expose their dear children to the contact of such creatures. What might they not hear? What might they not learn if they were to spend a whole day or night in a compartment which contained one or two of these persons, with a couple of their companions?

The situation seemed to be absolutely hopeless, when Madame de Martinsec happened to pass. She stopped to greet her friends, who told her their troubles.

"Why, the matter is quite simple," she exclaimed. "I will lend you the Abbé. I can very well get along without him for forty-eight hours. Rodolphe's education will not be compromised by

that. He can go for your children and bring them back again."

Thus it was agreed upon that Abbé Lecuir, a well-educated young priest, Rodolphe de Martinsec's tutor, should go to Paris the following week in order to fetch the three boys.

The Abbé left on Friday, and on Sunday morning he was at the Lyons Station, ready to take the eight-o'clock train with his three boys. This was a new express, which had been organized for only a few days by request of all the Auvergne bathers.

He was walking along, followed by his brood, and looking for an empty compartment, or for one occupied by respectable-looking people, for his mind was haunted by all the minute warnings of Mesdames de Sarcagnes, De Vaulacelles, and De Bridoie.

Suddenly he noticed an old gentleman and a white-haired old lady, who were talking to another lady already settled in the compartment. The old gentleman was an officer of the Legion of Honor, and these people looked quite respectable. "This is what I want," thought the Abbé. He told the three boys to go in, and followed them.

The old lady was saying: "Be sure to take care, my child."

The young one answered: "Oh! yes, mamma, fear nothing."

"Call the doctor as soon as you feel sick."

"Yes, yes, mamma."

"Good-by, my child."

"Good-by, mamma."

After lengthy farewells a conductor closed the doors, and the train started.

They were alone. The delighted Abbé was congratulating himself on his skill, and he began to talk

to the young people who had been confided to his care. It had been decided on the day of his departure that Madame de Martinsec would allow him to give lessons to these three boys during the vacations, and he wished to test the intelligence and character of his new scholars.

The oldest one, Roger de Sarcagnes, was one of these tall schoolboys who have grown beyond their age, thin and pale, and whose pronunciation did not yet seem to be quite settled. He spoke slowly and simply.

Gontran de Vaulacelles, on the contrary, was short and stocky, and he was tricky, sly, bad, and mischievous. He was continually making fun of everybody, spoke like a grown person, and said things with double meanings, which worried his parents.

The youngest lad, Roland de Bridoie, seemed to show no special aptitude for anything. He was a harmless little creature, who would some day resemble his father.

The Abbé had informed them that they would be under his orders during these two summer months; and he had given them a little lecture on their duties toward him, the policy he should pursue, and the method he should employ with them. He was an honest-hearted and simple priest, with a mind full of systems.

His speech was interrupted by a deep sigh from his neighbor. He turned and looked at her. She was in her corner, her eyes fixed on the floor, her cheeks a little pale. The Abbé returned to his pupils.

The train was rolling along at full speed, through fields and forests, passing under and over

bridges, shaking up the little company of travelers shut up in the compartments.

Gontran de Vaulacelles was now questioning Abbé Lecuir about Royat as to what amusement could be found in the country. Was there a river? How was the fishing? Should he have a horse, as he had had the year before?

The young woman suddenly uttered a sharp cry, an "Ah!" of suffering, quickly repressed.

The priest anxiously asked her: "Are you feeling ill, Madame?"

She answered: "No, no, Monsieur l'Abbé, it's nothing at all, just a slight pain. I have not been well for the last few days, and the motion of the train tires me."

Her face had indeed become quite livid. He insisted: "If I can do anything at all for you, Madame——"

"Oh! no, nothing at all, thank you, Monsieur l'Abbé."

The priest again took up his conversation with his pupils, preparing them for the instructions they were to receive under his direction.

Hours rolled by. The train stopped from time to time, and then started again. The young woman now appeared to be asleep and she was no longer moving, huddled up in her corner. Although the day was half over, she had as yet eaten nothing. The Abbé thought: "This person must be quite ill."

Only two hours remained before they were due to arrive at Clermont-Ferrand, when the woman suddenly began to moan. She had almost fallen from her seat, and, leaning against her hands, her eyes haggard, her features contorted, she kept repeating: "Oh! my God! Oh! my God!"

The Abbé rushed to her aid, exclaiming: "Madame! Madame! Madame, what is the matter?"

She stammered: "I—I—I think that—that I am going to give birth!" And she immediately began to shriek in a frightful manner. She let out a maddening cry which seemed to rasp her throat, shrill and terrible, which told of the agony of her soul and the torture of her body.

The poor priest stood bewildered before her, not knowing what to do, to say, to attempt, and he kept murmuring: "Gracious! if I only knew—gracious, if I only knew!" He had blushed to the tips of his ears, and his three pupils looked in a dazed manner at this prostrate, shrieking woman.

Suddenly she twisted, raised her arms over her head, and seemed to be shaken by a strange convulsion.

The Abbé thought that she was about to die—die beside him, deprived of aid and assistance, by his fault. Then he said in a resolute voice:

"I will help you, Madame. I do not know—but I will help you as best I can. I owe my assistance to every suffering creature."

Then he turned around to the three youngsters and cried: "You boys are to stick your heads out of the window, and if one of you turns around he shall copy a thousand lines of Virgil."

He lowered the three windows and stuck the three heads through them and pulled the shades down; then he repeated: "If you make one single motion you shall be deprived of your excursions throughout all the holidays. And do not forget that I never forgive."

Rolling up the sleeves of his cassock, he returned to the young woman.

She was still moaning, and at times shrieking. The Abbé, with a pained expression, kept assisting her, exhorting her and comforting her, and he continually kept one eye on the three youngsters, who were casting quick and secret glances toward the mysterious business which was being carried on by their new tutor.

"Monsieur de Vaulacelles, you will copy the verb 'to disobey' twenty times!" he cried.

"Monsieur de Bridoie, you shall have no dessert for a month!"

Suddenly the young woman stopped her complaining, and almost immediately a strange and faint cry, like that of a cat, caused the three schoolboys to turn around with a start, convinced that they had heard a new-born puppy.

The Abbé was holding in his hands a tiny naked infant. He was looking around with a bewildered expression; he seemed pleased and sad, ready to laugh and cry; the facial expression varied so suddenly that one might have thought him to be a lunatic.

He announced to his pupils, as if it were a great piece of news: "It's a boy."

Then immediately he continued: "Monsieur de Sarcagnes, pass me the bottle of water which is in the net. Very well. Open it. Good. Pour just a few drops in my hand, just a few—that's enough!"

And he poured this water over the bare brow of the little creature which he was holding in his arms; then he said: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The train was rolling into the station of Clermont. Madame de Bridoie's face appeared at the

door. Then the Abbé completely lost his head and presented to her the frail human creature, murmuring: "Madame has just had a little accident during the journey."

He looked as if he had picked this child up out of the gutter. Perspiration was standing out on his brow, and his cassock was all rumpled up. He kept repeating: "They saw nothing—nothing at all—I guarantee it. All three of them were looking through the window. I guarantee it—they saw nothing at all."

And he left the compartment with four boys, instead of the three which he had been sent to fetch; while Mesdames de Bridoie, De Vaulacelles, and De Sarcagnes, livid, exchanged bewildered looks, without finding a single thing to say.

That evening the three families were dining together in order to celebrate the return of the schoolboys. The conversation lagged; fathers, mothers, and even the children themselves looked preoccupied.

Suddenly the youngest one, Roland de Bridoie, asked:

"Say, mamma, where did the Abbé find the little boy?"

The mother merely answered. "Eat your dinner, and don't trouble us with your questions."

He was silent for a short while, and then continued: "There was nobody but this lady, who had a stomach-ache. The Abbé must be a prestidigitator like Robert Houdin, who brings a bowl full of fishes from under a handkerchief."

"Keep quiet. It was God who sent it."

"But where did God put it? I didn't see anything. Did he come in through the window?"

Madame de Bridoie impatiently answered: "Oh, be still. The stork brought him, as he does all other children. You know it very well."

"But there wasn't any stork on the train!"

Then Gontran de Vaulacelles, who had been listening, smiled slyly and said: "Yes, there was a stork. But Monsieur l'Abbé was the only one who saw it."

MADAME BAPTISTE

THE first thing I did was to look at the clock as I entered the waiting-room of the station at Loubain, and I found that I had to wait two hours and ten minutes for the Paris express.

I had walked twenty miles and felt suddenly tired. Not seeing anything on the station walls to amuse me, I went outside and stood there racking my brains to think of something to do. The street was a kind of boulevard, planted with acacias, and on either side a row of houses of varying shape and different styles of architecture, houses such as one only sees in a small town, and ascended a slight hill, at the extreme end of which there were some trees, as though it ended in a park.

From time to time a cat crossed the street and jumped over the gutters, carefully. A cur sniffed

at every tree and hunted for scraps from the kitchens, but I did not see a single human being, and I felt listless and disheartened. What could I do with myself? I was already thinking of the inevitable and interminable visit to the small café at the railway station, where I should have to sit over a glass of undrinkable beer and the illegible newspaper, when I saw a funeral procession coming out of a side street into the one in which I was, and the sight of the hearse was a relief to me. It would, at any rate, give me something to do for ten minutes. Suddenly, however, my curiosity was aroused. The hearse was followed by eight gentlemen, one of whom was weeping, while the others were chatting together, but there was no priest, and I thought to myself:

"This is a non-religious funeral;" and then I reflected that a town like Loubain must contain at least a hundred freethinkers, who would have made a point of making a manifestation. What could it be, then? The rapid pace of the procession clearly proved that the body was to be buried without ceremony, and, consequently, without the intervention of the Church.

My idle curiosity framed the most complicated surmises, and as the hearse passed me, a strange idea struck me, which was to follow it, with the eight gentlemen. That would take up my time for an hour, at least, and I, accordingly, walked with the others, with a sad look on my face, and, on seeing this, the two last turned round in surprise, and then spoke to each other in a low voice.

No doubt, they were asking each other whether I belonged to the town, and then they consulted the two in front of them, who stared at me in turn.

This close scrutiny annoyed me, and to put an end to it, I went up to them, and, after bowing, I said:

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for interrupting your conversation, but, seeing a civil funeral, I have followed it, although I did not know the deceased gentleman whom you are accompanying."

"It was a woman," one of them said.

I was much surprised at hearing this, and asked:

"But it is a civil funeral, is it not?"

The other gentleman, who evidently wished to tell me all about it, then said: "Yes and no. The clergy have refused to allow us the use of the church."

On hearing this, I uttered a prolonged "A—h!" of astonishment. I could not understand it at all, but my obliging neighbor continued:

"It is rather a long story. This young woman committed suicide, and that is the reason why she cannot be buried with any religious ceremony. The gentleman who is walking first, and who is crying, is her husband."

I replied, with some hesitation:

"You surprise and interest me very much, Monsieur. Shall I be indiscreet if I ask you to tell me the facts of the case? If I am troubling you, forget that I have said anything about the matter."

The gentleman took my arm familiarly.

"Not at all, not at all. Let us linger a little behind the others, and I will tell it you, although it is a very sad story. We have plenty of time before getting to the cemetery, the trees of which you see up yonder, for it is a stiff pull up this hill."

And he began:

"This young woman, Madame Paul Hamot, was the daughter of a wealthy merchant in the neighbor-

hood, Monsieur Fontanelle. When she was a mere child of eleven, she had a terrible adventure; a footman attacked her and she nearly died. A terrible criminal case was the result, and the man was sentenced to penal servitude for life.

"The little girl grew up, stigmatized by disgrace, isolated, without any companions, and grown-up people would scarcely kiss her, for they thought that they would soil their lips if they touched her forehead, and she became a sort of monster, a phenomenon to all the town. People said to each other in a whisper: 'You know, little Fontanelle,' and everybody turned away in the streets when she passed. Her parents could not even get a nurse to take her out for a walk, as the other servants held aloof from her, as if contact with her would poison everybody who came near her.

"It was pitiable to see the poor child go and play every afternoon. She remained quite by herself, standing by her maid, and looking at the other children amusing themselves. Sometimes, yielding to an irresistible desire to mix with the other children, she advanced timidly, with nervous gestures, and mingled with a group, with furtive steps, as if conscious of her own disgrace. And, immediately, the mothers, aunts, and nurses would come running from every seat, and take the children intrusted to their care by the hand and drag them brutally away.

"Little Fontanelle remained isolated, wretched, without understanding what it meant, and then she began to cry, nearly heartbroken with grief, and then she used to run and hide her head in her nurse's lap, sobbing.

"As she grew up, it was worse still. They kept the girls from her, as if she were stricken with the

plague. Remember that she had nothing to learn, nothing; that she no longer had the right to the symbolical wreath of orange-flowers; that almost before she could read she had penetrated that redoubtable mystery which mothers scarcely allow their daughters to guess at, trembling as they enlighten them on the night of their marriage.

"When she went through the streets, always accompanied by her governess, as if her parents feared some fresh, terrible adventure, with her eyes cast down under the load of that mysterious disgrace which she felt was always weighing upon her, the other girls, who were not nearly so innocent as people thought, whispered and giggled as they looked at her knowingly, and immediately turned their heads absently, if she happened to look at them. People scarcely greeted her; only a few men bowed to her, and the mothers pretended not to see her, while some young blackguards called her Madame Baptiste, after the name of the footman who had attacked her.

"Nobody knew the secret torture of her mind, for she hardly ever spoke, and never laughed, and her parents themselves appeared uncomfortable in her presence, as if they bore her a constant grudge for some irreparable fault.

"An honest man would not willingly give his hand to a liberated convict, would he, even if that convict were his own son? And Monsieur and Madame Fontanelle looked on their daughter as they would have done on a son who had just been released from the hulks. She was pretty and pale, tall, slender, distinguished-looking, and she would have pleased me very much, Monsieur, but for that unfortunate affair.

" Well, when a new sub-prefect was appointed here, eighteen months ago, he brought his private secretary with him. He was a queer sort of fellow, who had lived in the Latin Quarter, it appears. He saw Mademoiselle Fontanelle, and fell in love with her, and when told of what had occurred, he merely said: 'Bah! That is just a guarantee for the future, and I would rather it should have happened before I married her than afterward. I shall live tranquilly with that woman.'

" He paid his addresses to her, asked for her hand, and married her, and then, not being deficient in assurance, he paid wedding-calls, as if nothing had happened. Some people returned them, others did not; but, at last, the affair began to be forgotten, and she took her proper place in society.

" She adored her husband as if he had been a god; for, you must remember, he had restored her to honor and to social life, had braved public opinion, faced insults, and, in a word, performed such a courageous act as few men would undertake, and she felt the most exalted and tender love for him.

" When she became *enceinte,* and it was known, the most particular people and the greatest sticklers opened their doors to her, as if she had been definitely purified by maternity.

" It is strange, but so it is, and thus everything was going on as well as possible until the other day, which was the feast of the patron saint of our town. The Prefect, surrounded by his staff and the authorities, presided at the musical competition, and when he had finished his speech the distribution of medals began, which Paul Hamot, his private secretary, handed to those who were entitled to them.

" As you know, there are always jealousies and

rivalries, which make people forget all propriety. All the ladies of the town were there on the platform, and, in his turn, the bandmaster from the village of Mourmillon came up. This band was only to receive a second-class medal, for one cannot give first-class medals to everybody, can one? But when the private secretary handed him his badge, the man threw it in his face and exclaimed:

" ' You may keep your medal for Baptiste. You owe him a first-class one, also, just as you do me.'

" There were a number of people there who began to laugh. The common herd are neither charitable nor refined, and every eye was turned toward that poor lady. Have you ever seen a woman going mad, Monsieur? Well, we were present at the sight! She got up, and fell back on her chair three times in succession, as if she wished to make her escape, but saw that she could not make her way through the crowd, and then another voice in the crowd exclaimed:

" ' Oh! Oh! Madame Baptiste! '

" And a great uproar, partly of laughter and partly of indignation, arose. The word was repeated over and over again; people stood on tiptoe to see the unhappy woman's face; husbands lifted their wives up in their arms, so that they might see her, and people asked:

" ' Which is she? The one in blue? '

" The boys crowed like cocks, and laughter was heard all over the place.

" She did not move now on her state chair, but sat just as if she had been put there for the crowd to look at. She could not move, nor conceal herself, nor hide her face. Her eyelids blinked quickly, as if a vivid light were shining on them, and she

breathed heavily like a horse that is going up a steep hill, so that it almost broke one's heart to see her. Meanwhile, however, Monsieur Hamot had seized the ruffian by the throat, and they were rolling on the ground together, amid a scene of confusion, and the ceremony was interrupted.

"An hour later, as the Hamots were returning home, the young woman, who had not uttered a word since the insult, but who was trembling as if all her nerves had been set in motion by springs, suddenly sprang over the parapet of the bridge, and threw herself into the river, before her husband could prevent her. The water is very deep under the arches, and it was two hours before her body was recovered. Of course, she was dead."

The narrator stopped, and then added:

"It was, perhaps, the best thing she could do under the circumstances. There are some things which cannot be wiped out, and now you understand why the clergy refused to have her taken into church. Ah! If it had been a religious funeral the whole town would have been present, but you can understand that her suicide added to the other affair and made families abstain from attending her funeral; and then, it is not an easy matter here to attend a funeral which is performed without religious rites."

We passed through the cemetery gates and I waited, much moved by what I had heard, until the coffin had been lowered into the grave, before I went up to the poor fellow who was sobbing violently, to press his hand warmly. He looked at me in surprise through his tears, and then said:

"Thank you, Monsieur." And I was not sorry that I had followed the funeral.

A WARNING NOTE

I HAVE received the following letter. Thinking that it may be profitable to many readers, I lost no time in communicating to them its contents:

"PARIS, November 15th, 1886.

"Monsieur: You often, either in the form of short stories or chronicles, deal with subjects relating to what I may describe as 'current morals.' I am going to submit to you some reflections which ought, it seems to me, to furnish you with the materials for one of your tales.

"I am not married; I am a bachelor, and, as it seems to me, a rather simple man. But I fancy that many men, the greater number of men, are simple in the way that I am. Acting always, or nearly always, in good faith myself, I am unable to understand the inherent astuteness of my neighbors, and I look straight before me as I proceed, without being sufficiently on my guard against hidden motives, secret actions.

"We are nearly all accustomed as a rule to take

things as they appear, and to take people at their own valuation; and very few possess that perception which enables certain men to divine the real and hidden nature of others. From this peculiar and conventional attitude in regard to life we have come to this, that we pass like moles through the midst of events, and that we never believe in what really is, but in what appears to be, that as soon as we are shown the fact behind the veil we declare that it is not true to life, and that everything which displeases our idealistic morality is classed by us as an exception, without taking into account that these exceptions all brought together constitute nearly the sum total of cases. Another result of this is that credulous good people like me are deceived by everybody, and especially by women, who have a talent in this direction.

"I have started far afield in order to come to the particular fact which interests me. I have a sweetheart, a married woman. Like many others, I imagined, of course, that I had chanced on an exception, on an unhappy little woman who was deceiving her husband for the first time. I had paid attentions to her, or, rather, I had looked on myself as having paid attention to her for a long time, as having overcome her scruples by dint of kindness and love, and as having triumphed by the sheer force of perseverance. In fact, I had made use of a thousand precautions, a thousand devices, and a thousand subtle dallyings in order to succeed in getting the better of her.

"Now, here is what happened last week: Her husband being absent for some days, she suggested that we should both dine together, and that I should wait on myself so as to avoid the presence of a man-

servant. She had a fixed idea which had haunted her for the last four or five months: She wanted to become intoxicated, without being afraid of consequences, without having to go back home, or to speak to her chambermaid and to walk before witnesses. She had often taken a little too much without going farther, and she had enjoyed it. So she promised herself that she would become intoxicated for once, only once, but thoroughly so. She pretended at her own house that she was going to spend twenty-four hours with some friends near Paris, and she reached my abode just about dinner-hour.

" A woman naturally ought not to get drunk on anything but champagne frappé. She drank a large glass of it fasting, and before the oysters were served she was talking incoherently.

" We had a cold dinner spread on a table behind me. All I had to do was to reach out my arm and take the dishes or plates, and I did the honors indifferently well as I listened to her chattering.

" She kept taking swallows, haunted by her fixed idea. She began by making me the recipient of meaningless and interminable confidences about her sensations as a young girl. She went on and on, her eyes wandering and sparkling, her tongue loosed, as her frivolous ideas poured forth just as tape is rolled off a ticker.

" From time to time she asked me:

" ' Am I tipsy? '

" ' No, not yet.'

" And she went on drinking.

" She was so before long, not so as to lose her senses, but tipsy enough to tell the truth, as it seemed to me.

" Her confidences as to her emotions while a

young girl were succeeded by more intimate confidences as to her relations with her husband. She made them without restraint till I was embarrassed, saying continually: 'I can tell everything to you. To whom could I tell everything if it were not to you?' So I was made acquainted with all the habits, all the defects, all the fads and the most secret inclinations of her husband.

"And by way of claiming my approval she asked: 'Isn't he a duffer? Do you think he can get ahead of me, eh? And the first time I saw you, I said to myself, 'Let me see! I like him, and I'll take him for my lover. It was then you began paying me attention.'

"I must have presented an odd appearance, for she burst out laughing, exclaiming: 'Oh, you big simpleton, you did go about it cautiously; but when men pay us attention, you old stupid, it is because we permit it. A man must be a fool not to understand, by a mere glance at us, that we mean "Yes." Ah! I believe I waited for you, booby! Oh! yes, flowers, verses, compliments, more verses, and nothing else! I was very near letting you go, my fine fellow, you were so long in making up your mind. And only to think that half the men in the world are like you, while the other half, ha! ha! ha!'

"This laugh of hers sent a cold shiver down my back. I stammered: 'The other half—what about the other half?'

"She still went on drinking, her eyes sparkling from the wine, her mind impelled by the imperious necessity to tell the truth which sometimes takes possession of drunkards.

"She replied: 'Ah! the other half makes quick work of it—too quick; but, all the same, they are

right. There are days when we don't agree; but there are days, too, when all goes right, in spite of everything. . . . My dear, if you only knew how funny it is—the way the two kinds of men act! You see, the timid ones, such as you, you never could imagine what sort the others are and what they do, immediately, as soon as they find themselves alone with us. They are regular dare-devils! They get many a slap in the face from us, no doubt of that, but what does that matter? They know we're the sort that kiss and don't tell! They know us well, they do!'

"I stared at her with the eyes of an inquisitor, and with a mad desire to make her speak, to learn everything from her. How often had I put this question to myself: 'How do the other men behave toward the women who belong to us?' I was fully conscious of the fact that, from the way I saw two men talking to the same woman publicly in a drawing-room, these two men, if they found themselves, one after the other, all alone with her, would conduct themselves quite differently, although they were both equally well acquainted with her. We can guess at the first glance of the eye that certain beings, naturally endowed with the power of seduction, or, perhaps, more lively, more daring than we are, attain after an hour's chat with a woman who pleases them a degree of intimacy that we would not hope for in a year. Well, these men, these seducers, these bold adventurers, when the occasion presents itself to them, take liberties which we timid ones would consider odious outrages, but which women, perhaps, look on merely as pardonable effrontery, as indecent homage to their irresistible grace.

"So I asked her: 'There are some men, are there not, who are very improper?'

"She threw herself back in her chair in order to laugh more at her ease, but with a nervous, unhealthy laugh, one of those laughs which ends in an attack of nerves; then, a little more calmly, she replied: 'Ha! ha! my dear, improper? That is to say, that they dare everything at once, all, you understand, and many other things, too.'

"I felt disgusted as if she had just revealed to me a monstrous thing.

"'And you permit this, you women?'

"'No, we don't permit it; we slap them in the face, but, for all that, they amuse us! And then with them one is always afraid, one is never easy. You must keep watching them the whole time; it is like fighting a duel. You have to keep staring into their eyes to see what they are thinking of or where they are putting their hands. They are blackguards, if you like, but they love us better than you do.'

"A singular and unexpected sensation stole over me. Although a bachelor and determined to remain a bachelor, I suddenly felt in my breast the spirit of a husband in the face of this impudent confidence. I felt myself the friend, the ally, the brother of all these confiding men who are, if not robbed, at least defrauded by all these pirates.

"It is this strange emotion, Monsieur, that I am obeying at this moment, in writing to you, and in begging of you to address a warning note to the great army of easy-going husbands.

"However, I had still some lingering doubts. This woman was drunk and must be lying.

"I went on to inquire: 'How is it that you

never relate these adventures to any one, you women?'

"She gazed at me with profound pity, and with such an air of sincerity that for the moment I thought she had been sobered by astonishment.

"We—— My dear fellow, you are very foolish. Why do we never talk to you about these things? Ha! ha! ha! Does your valet tell you about his tips, his odd sous? Well, these are our little tips. The husband ought not to complain when we don't go any farther. But how stupid you are! . . . And then what harm does it do as long as we don't yield?'

"I again asked her, with much embarrassment:

"'So then you have often been kissed by men?'

"She answered, with an air of sovereign contempt for the man who could have any doubt on the subject:

"'Why, every woman has been often embraced. . . . Try it on with any of them, no matter whom, in order to see for yourself, you great goose! Look here! embrace Madame de X! She is quite young and very virtuous. Embrace some one, my friend—embrace and touch; you will see, ha! ha! ha!'

* * * * * * *

"All of a sudden she flung her glass straight at the chandelier. The champagne fell down in a shower, extinguishing three wax-candles, stained the hangings, and deluged the table, while the broken glass was scattered about the dining-room. Then she made an effort to seize the bottle to do the same with it, but I prevented her. After that, she began to scream in a shrill voice—the nervous attack had come on, as I had foreseen. . . .

"Some days later I had almost forgotten this avowal of a tipsy woman when I chanced to find myself at an evening party with this Madame de X—— whom my sweetheart had advised me to embrace. As I lived in the same neighborhood as she did, I offered to drive her to her door, for she was alone this evening. She accepted my offer.

"As soon as we were in the carriage, I said to myself: 'Come! I must try it on!' But I had not the courage. I did not know how to make a start, how to begin the attack.

"Then, suddenly, the desperate courage of cowards came to my aid. I said to her: 'How pretty you looked this evening!'

"She replied with a laugh: 'So, then, this evening was an exception, as this is the first time you noticed it.'

"I did not know what rejoinder to make. Certainly my gallantry was not making progress. After a little reflection, however, I managed to say:

"'No, but I never dared to tell you.'

"She was astonished.

"'Why?'

"'Because it is—it is a little difficult.'

"'Difficult to tell a woman that she's pretty? Why, where did you come from? You should always tell us so, even when you only half think it, because it always gives us pleasure to hear . . .'

"I felt myself suddenly stirred by a whimsical audacity, and, catching her round the waist, I sought to kiss her.

"However, I must have been very awkward while trying not to be too rough, for she kept turning her head aside so as to avoid contact with my face, saying:

"'Oh, no—this is rather too much—too much . . . You are too hasty! Take care of my hair. You cannot kiss a woman who has her hair dressed like mine! . . .'

"I resumed my former position in the carriage, disconcerted, unnerved by this repulse. But the carriage drew up before her gate; and as she stepped out of it, she held out her hand to me, saying in her most gracious tones:

"'Thanks, dear Monsieur, for having seen me home . . . and don't forget my advice!'

"I saw her three days later. She had forgotten everything.

"And I, Monsieur, I am incessantly thinking of the other sort of men—the sort of men to whom a lady's coiffure is no obstacle, and who know how to take advantage of every opportunity."

JOSEPH

THE little Baroness Andrée de la Fraisières and little Comtesse Noémi de Gardens were both of them drunk, quite drunk. They had dined together in the large room facing the sea. The soft breeze of a summer evening blew in at the open window, soft and fresh at the same time, a breeze that smelt of the sea. The two young women, extended in their lounging chairs, sipped their Chartreuse from time to time, as they smoked cigarettes. They were talking most confidentially, telling each other details which nothing but this charming intoxication could have permitted their pretty lips to utter.

Their husbands had returned to Paris that afternoon, and had left them alone on that deserted little sea beach, which they had selected so as to avoid those gallant marauders that are constantly met

with in fashionable watering places. As they were absent five days in the week, they objected to country excursions, luncheons on the grass, swimming lessons and those sudden familiarities which spring up in the idle life of watering places. Dieppe, Etretat, Trouville seemed to them places to be avoided, and they had rented a house which had been built and abandoned by an eccentric individual in the valley of Roqueville, near Fécamp, and there they buried their wives for the whole summer.

The ladies were frankly drunk. Not knowing how to amuse themselves, the little Baroness had suggested a good dinner and champagne. To begin with, they had found great amusement in cooking this dinner themselves, and then they had eaten it merrily, and had drunk freely, in order to allay the thirst which the heat of the fire had excited. Now they were chatting and talking nonsense, while gently moistening their throats with Chartreuse. In fact, they did not in the least know any longer what they were saying.

The Countess, with her feet in the air on the back of a chair, was further gone than her friend.

"To complete an evening like this," she said, "we ought to have a lover apiece. If I had foreseen this some time ago, I would have sent for a couple from Paris, and I would have let you have one. . . ." "I can always find one," the other replied; "I could have one this very evening, if I wished." "What nonsense! At Roqueville, my dear? It would have to be some peasant, then." "No, not altogether." "Well, tell me all about it." "What do you want me to tell you?" "About your lover?" "My dear, I do not want to live without being loved, for I should fancy I was dead

if I were not loved." "So should I." "Is not that so?" "Yes. Men cannot understand it! And especially our husbands!" "No, not in the least. How can you expect it to be different? The love which we want is made up of being spoiled, of gallantries and of pretty words and actions. That is the nourishment of our hearts; it is indispensable to our life, indispensable, indispensable."

"Indispensable."

"I must feel that somebody is thinking of me, always, everywhere. When I go to sleep and when I wake up, I must know that somebody loves me somewhere, that I am being dreamed of, longed for. Without that, I should be wretched, wretched! Oh! yes, unhappy enough to do nothing but cry." "I am just the same."

"You must remember that anything else is impossible. When a husband has been nice for six months, or a year, or two years, he necessarily becomes a brute, yes, a regular brute. . . . He does not put himself out for anything, but shows himself just as he is, and makes a scene on the slightest provocation, or without any provocation whatever. One cannot love a man with whom one lives constantly." "That is quite true." "Isn't it? . . . What was I saying? I cannot the least remember?" "You were saying that all husbands are brutes!" "Yes, brutes . . . all of them." "That is quite true." "And then?" "What do you mean?" "What was I saying just then?" "I don't know because you did not say it!" "But I had something to tell you." "Oh! yes, that is true; well? . . ." "Oh! I have got it. . . ." "Well, I am listening." "I was telling you that I can find lovers everywhere." "How do you man-

age it?" "Like this. Now follow me carefully. When I get to some fresh place I take notes and make my choice." "You make your choice?" "Yes, of course I do. First of all I take notes. I ask questions. Above all, a man must be discreet, rich, and generous; is not that so?" "It is quite true!" "And then he must please me, as a man." "Of course." "Then I bait the hook for him." "You bait the hook?" "Yes, just as one does to catch fish. Have you never fished with a hook and line?" "No, never." "That is a mistake; it is very amusing, and besides that, it is instructive. Well, then, I bait the hook. . . ." "How do you do it?" "How stupid you are! Does not one catch the man one wants to catch, without their having any choice? And they really think that they choose . . . the fools . . . but it is we who choose . . . always. . . . Just think, when one is not ugly nor stupid, as is the case with us, all men aspire to us, all . . . without exception. We look them over from morning till night, and when we have selected one, we fish for him. . . ." "But that does not tell me how you do it?" "How I do it? . . . Why, I do nothing; I allow myself to be looked at, that is all." "You allow yourself to be looked at? . . ." "Why, yes; that is quite enough. When one has allowed one's self to be looked at several times following, a man immediately thinks you the most lovely, most seductive of women, and then he begins to make love to you. I give him to understand that he is not so bad-looking, without saying anything to him, of course, and he falls in love, like a log. I have him fast, and it lasts a longer or a shorter time, according to his qualities."

"And do you catch all whom you please, like that?" "Nearly all." "Oh! So there are some who resist?" "Sometimes." "Why?" "Oh! Why? A man is a Joseph for three reasons. Because he is in love with another woman, because he is excessively timid, or because he is . . . how shall I say it? . . . incapable of carrying out the conquest of a woman to the end. . . ." "Oh! my dear! . . . Do you really believe? . . ." "I am sure of it . . . there are many of this latter class, many, many . . . many more than people think. Oh! they look just like everybody else . . . they strut like peacocks. . . . No, when I said peacocks . . . I made a mistake, for they could not display themselves." "Oh! my dear. . . ." "As to the timid, they are sometimes unspeakably stupid. They are the sort of men who ought not to undress themselves, even when they are going to bed alone, when there is a looking-glass in their room. With them, one must be energetic, make use of looks, and squeeze their hands, and even that is useless sometimes. They never know how or where to begin. When one faints in their presence . . . as a last resource . . . they try to bring you round . . . and if you do not recover your senses immediately . . . they go and get assistance.

"Those whom I prefer myself are other women's lovers. I carry them by assault . . . at . . . at . . . at the point of the bayonet, my dear!" "That is all very well, but when there are no men, as here, for instance?" "I find them." "You find them? But where?" "Everywhere. But that reminds me of my story.

"Now, listen. Just two years ago, my husband

made me pass the summer on his estate at Bougrolles. There was nothing there . . . you know what I mean, nothing, nothing, nothing whatever! In the neighboring country houses there were a few disgusting boors, who cared for nothing but shooting, and who lived in country houses which had not even a bathroom, men who perspire, go to bed covered with perspiration, and whom it would be impossible to improve, because their principles of life are dirty. Now just guess what I did!" "I cannot possibly." "Ha! ha! ha! I had just been reading a number of George Sand's novels which exalt the man of the people, novels in which the workingmen are sublime and all the men of the world are criminals. In addition to this, I had seen *Ruy Blas* the winter before, and it had impressed me very much. Well, one of our farmers had a son, a good-looking young fellow of two and twenty who had studied for a priest, but had left the seminary in disgust. Well, I took him as footman!" "Oh! . . . And then? . . . What afterward?"

"Then . . . then, my dear, I treated him very haughtily, and showed him a good deal of my person. I did not lure this rustic on, I simply inflamed him! . . ." "Oh! Andrée!" "Yes, and I enjoyed the fun very much. People say that servants count for nothing! Well, he did not count for much. I used to ring to give him his orders every morning while my maid was dressing me, and every evening as well, while she was undressing me.

"My dear, he caught fire like a thatched roof. Then, at meals, I used continually to talk about cleanliness, about taking care of one's person, about baths and shower baths, until at the end of a fortnight he bathed in the river morning and night, and

used to perfume himself enough to poison the whole château. I was even obliged to forbid him to use perfumes, telling him, with furious looks, that men ought never to use anything but eau de Cologne."

"Oh! Andrée!"

"Then, I took it into my head to get together a library suitable to the country. I sent for a few hundred moral novels, which I lent to all our peasants and all my servants. A few books . . . a few . . . poetical books . . . such as excite the mind of . . . schoolboys and schoolgirls . . . had found their way into my collection . . . and I gave them to my footman. That taught him life . . . a funny sort of life." "Oh! Andrée!"

"Then I grew familiar with him, and used to say thou to him. I had given him the name of Joseph. And, my dear, he was in a state . . . in a terrible state. . . . He got as thin as . . . as a barn-door cock . . . and rolled his eyes like an idiot. I was extremely amused; it was one of the most delightful summers I ever spent. . . ." "And then? . . ." "Then? . . . Oh! yes. . . . Well, one day when my husband was away from home, I told him to order the basket phaeton and to drive me into the woods. It was warm, very warm. . . . There!" "Oh, Andrée, do tell me all about it. . . . It is so amusing. . . ." "Here, have a glass of Chartreuse, otherwise I shall empty the decanter myself. Well, I felt ill, on the road." "How?" "You are very stupid. I told him that I was not feeling well, and that he must lay me on the grass, and when I was lying there I told him I was choking, and that he must unlace me. And then, when I was unlaced, I

fainted." "Did you go right off?" "Oh! dear no, not the least." "Well?"

"Well, I was obliged to remain unconscious for nearly an hour, as he could find no means of bringing me round. But I was very patient, and did not open my eyes."

"Oh! Andrée! . . . And what did you say to him?" "I? Nothing at all! How was I to know anything, as I was unconscious? I thanked him, and told him to help me into the carriage, and he drove me back to the château; but he nearly upset us in turning into the gate!" "Oh! Andrée! And is that all? . . ." "That is all. . . ." "You did not faint more than that once?" "Only once, of course! I did not want to take such a fellow for my lover." "Did you keep him long after that?" "Yes, of course. I have him still. Why should I have sent him away? I had nothing to complain of." "Oh! Andrée! And is he in love with you still?" "Of course he is." "Where is he?"

The little Baroness put out her hand to the wall and touched the electric bell, and the door opened almost immediately, and a tall footman came in who diffused a scent of eau de Cologne all round him. "Joseph," she said to him, "I am afraid I am going to faint; send my lady's maid to me."

The man stood motionless, like a soldier before his officer, and fixed an ardent look on his mistress, who continued: "Go quickly, you great idiot, we are not in the wood to-day, and Rosalie will attend to me better than you would." He turned on his heels and went, and the little Baroness asked nervously: "But what shall you say to your maid?" "I shall tell her what we have been doing!

No, I shall merely get her to unlace me; it will relieve my chest, for I can scarcely breathe. I am drunk . . . my dear . . . so drunk that I should fall if I were to get up from my chair."

THE PEDDLER

HOW many fleeting associations, trifling things, chance meetings, humble dramas we have witnessed or guessed at, while our mind is still ignorant and unformed, are, as it were, guiding threads which lead it gradually to a knowledge of sad realities.

As I saunter along idly in my customary walks my mind, abstracted in endless, aimless reverie, constantly recurs to little, long-past incidents, amusing or the reverse, which rise up before me like birds in the brush.

This summer, as I was wandering along a road in Savoy overlooking the right bank of the Lake of Bourget, and as my glance lingered on that mass of water, mirror-like and of a unique shade of pale blue, as it gleamed in the rays of the setting sun, I felt my heart stirred by that emotion which I have felt since childhood for lakes, rivers, the sea.

On the other bank of the immense watery sur-

face rose the high mountain range, its base extending in one direction toward the Rhône, and in the other toward the Bourget, beyond the line of vision, its crest dentated like a cock's comb as far as the last summit of the Dent du Chat. On either side of the road grapevines, festooned from tree to tree, smothered with their leaves the slender branches round which they twined, and extended across the landscape in green, yellow, and red garlands, dotted with clusters of black grapes.

The road was deserted, white, and dusty. Suddenly a man emerged from the grove of large trees that incloses the village of Saint-Innocent, and, bending under a load, he came toward me, leaning on a cane.

As he approached I recognized in him one of those peddlers, or wandering merchants, who sell small articles for a trifling amount, and there came to my mind a reminiscence of days long past, a mere nothing, simply an adventure that happened to me between Argenteuil and Paris when I was twenty-five.

All my happiness at that time consisted in boating. I had taken a room at a cheap eating house in Argenteuil, and every evening I took the parliamentary train, that long, slow train that deposits at every station a crowd of men carrying packages; they are heavy and corpulent, as they take no exercise, and their trousers are baggy from continually sitting at an office desk. This train, in which I seemed to get a whiff of the office and of official documents, deposited me at Argenteuil. My boat was waiting for me, ready to skim over the water, and I rowed along rapidly, dining either at Chatou, at Epinay, or at Saint-Ouen. When I got back I

put away my boat and started on foot for Paris with the moon shining down on me.

Well, one night on the white road I perceived in front of me a man walking. Oh! I was constantly meeting those night travelers of the Parisian suburbs so much dreaded by belated citizens. This man went on slowly before me with a heavy load on his shoulders.

I came right up to him at a rapid pace, my steps resounding on the road. He stopped and turned round; then, to avoid me, he crossed to the opposite side of the road.

As I rapidly passed him, he called out to me:

"Hullo! good evening, Monsieur."

I responded:

"Good evening, mate."

He went on:

"Are you going far?"

"I am going to Paris."

"You won't be long getting there; you're going at a good pace. As for me, I have too big a load on my shoulders to walk so quickly."

I slackened my pace. Why had this man spoken to me? What was he carrying in this big pack? Vague suspicions of crime sprang up in my mind and made me curious. The columns of the newspapers every morning contain so many accounts of crimes committed in this place, the peninsula of Gennevilliers, that some of them must be true. Such things are not invented merely to amuse readers—all this catalogue of arrests and varied misdeeds with which the reports of the law courts are filled.

However, this man's voice seemed rather timid than bold, and up to the present his manner had been more cautious than aggressive.

In my turn I began to question him:

"And you, are you going far?"

"Not farther than Asnières."

"Is Asnières your place of abode?"

"Yes, Monsieur, I am a peddler by occupation, and I live at Asnières."

He had left the sidewalk where pedestrians walk beneath the shade of the trees in the daytime and walked in the middle of the road. I did the same. We glanced suspiciously at each other, holding our sticks in our hands. When I was quite close to him I felt perfectly reassured; he apparently shared this feeling, for he asked:

"Would you mind going a little more slowly?"

"Why should I go slowly?"

"Because I don't care for this road by night. I have goods on my back, and two are always better than one. When two men are together people seldom attack them."

I felt that he was right, and that he was afraid. So I yielded to his wishes, and we walked along, side by side, this stranger and I, at one o'clock in the morning, along the road leading from Argenteuil to Asnières.

"Why are you going home so late if it is so dangerous?" I asked my companion.

He told me his history. He had not intended to return home this evening, as he had taken with him that very morning a stock of goods to last him three or four days. But he had been so fortunate in disposing of them that he found it necessary to return home at once in order to deliver next day a number of things which had been bought on credit.

He explained to me with genuine satisfaction that he was doing very well, having a talent for talk-

ing, and that while displaying some trifles while chatting he was able to dispose of many other things that were heavy to carry.

He added:

"I have a shop at Asnières. My wife keeps it."

"Ah! So you're married?"

"Yes, Monsieur, for the last fifteen months. I have a very nice wife. She'll be surprised when she sees me coming home to-night."

He then gave me an account of his marriage. He had been attentive to this girl for two years, but she had taken time to make up her mind.

She had since her childhood kept a little shop at the corner of a street, where she sold all sorts of things—ribbons, flowers in summer, and principally pretty little shoe-buckles, and many other trifles, of which, owing to the kindness of a manufacturer, she made a specialty. She was well known in Asnières as "La Bluette." This name was given to her because she often dressed in blue. And she made money, as she was very clever in everything she did. He did not think she was very well at the present moment, and believed she was *enceinte,* but he was not quite sure. Their business was prospering, and he traveled about exhibiting samples to all the small dealers in the adjoining districts. He had become a sort of traveling commission agent for some of the manufacturers, working at the same time for them and for himself.

"And you—in what business are you engaged?" he said.

I answered hesitatingly. I explained that I had a sailing-boat and two yawls in Argenteuil, that I came for a row every evening, and that, as I was fond of exercise, I sometimes walked back to Paris,

where I had a profession, which I led him to infer was a lucrative one.

He remarked:

"' Faith, if I had money, as you have, I wouldn't amuse myself by trudging along the roads like this at night. It isn't safe along here."

He gave me a sidelong glance, and I asked myself whether he might not, after all, be a cunning rascal, who did not want to run any fruitless risk.

Then I felt reassured as he murmured:

" A little less quickly, if you please. This pack of mine is heavy."

The sight of a group of houses showed that we had reached Asnières.

" I am almost at home," he said. " We don't sleep in the shop; it is watched at night by a dog, but a dog who is worth four men. And then it costs too much to live in the center of the town. But listen to me, Monsieur! You have rendered me a great service, for I don't feel my mind at ease when I'm traveling with my pack along the roads. So now you must come in with me and drink a glass of mulled wine with my wife if she hasn't gone to bed, for she is a sound sleeper and doesn't like to be waked up. Besides, I'm not a bit afraid without my pack, and so I'll see you to the gates of the city with a cudgel in my hand."

I declined the invitation; he insisted on my coming in; I still held back; he pressed me with so much earnestness and evident sincerity and regret at my refusal, for he expressed himself well, asking me if I would not take a drink with him because of his occupation, that I at last yielded, and followed him along a lonely road to one of those large dilapidated houses that one sees on the outskirts of suburbs.

Arrived at the door, I hesitated. This great plaster barrack looked like a thieves' resort, like a den of highway robbers. But he made me take the lead as he pushed open a door. He guided me with his hands on my shoulders, through profound darkness, toward a stairway where I had to feel my way with my hands and feet, with a well-grounded apprehension of tumbling into some gaping cellar.

When I had reached the first landing he said to me: "Go on up! It's on the sixth story."

I searched my pockets, and, finding there a box of candle matches, I lighted the way up the ascent. He followed me, puffing beneath his pack, as he repeated:

"It's high up! It's high up!"

When we were at the top of the house he drew forth a key attached to the inside of his coat by a string, and, unlocking the door, he made me enter.

It was a little whitewashed room, with a table in the center, six chairs, and a kitchen-cupboard close to the wall.

"I am going to wake up my wife," he said; "then I am going down to the cellar to fetch some wine; it doesn't keep up here."

He went over to one of the two doors which opened out of this apartment, and called:

"Bluette! Bluette!" Bluette did not reply. He called out in a louder tone: "Bluette! Bluette!"

Then, knocking at the partition with his fist, he growled: "Will you wake up, in God's name?"

He waited, put his ear to the keyhole, and muttered, in a calmer tone: "Pooh! if she is asleep, she must be allowed to sleep! I'll go and get the wine: wait a couple of minutes for me."

He disappeared. I sat down and made the best of it.

What had I come to this place for? All of a sudden I gave a start, for I heard people talking in low tones, and moving about quietly, almost noiselessly, in the room where the wife slept.

The devil! I must have fallen into a trap! How was it she did not wake, this Bluette, at all the noise her husband made? Perhaps it was only a signal to say to his accomplices: "There's a mouse in the trap. I'll watch the door; you attend to the rest." I could hear them more distinctly; they were turning the key in the lock. My heart beat rapidly. I retreated to the other end of the room, saying to myself: "Well, I must defend myself!" and, seizing a chair by the back, I prepared for an energetic struggle.

The door opened slightly, and a hand appeared holding it ajar; then a head, the head of a man wearing a hard felt hat, was pushed through the half-open door, and I saw two eyes looking at me. Then, so quickly that I had not time to think of defending myself, the individual, the supposed criminal, a big young fellow, with bare feet and his clothes just thrown on him, without a tie, his shoes in his hand, a handsome fellow, truly, almost a gentleman, sprang toward the entrance door and disappeared down the stairway.

I sat down again. This was becoming interesting. I waited for the husband, who was a long time getting the wine. At length I heard him coming upstairs, and the sound of his steps made me laugh, one of those solitary laughs which one cannot restrain.

He came in, bringing two bottles, and asked:

"Is my wife still asleep? You have not heard her moving about?"

I suspected that she had her ear to the door, and I said:

"No, I have heard nothing."

And now he again called out:

"Pauline!"

She made no reply, and did not even move.

He came back to me, and explained:

"You see, she doesn't like me to come home at night and take a drop with a friend."

"So you think she is not asleep?"

"Of course she is not asleep." He seemed annoyed.

"Well, at any rate," he said, "let us have a drink together."

And he at once showed a disposition to empty the two bottles, one after the other, without more ado.

This time I did display some energy. When I had swallowed one glass I rose up to leave. He no longer spoke of accompanying me, and, glancing toward his wife's door with a sullen scowl, the scowl of a common man in an angry mood, the scowl of a brute whose violence is only slumbering, he muttered:

"She'll have to open that door when you are gone."

I stared at this poltroon, who had worked himself into a fit of rage without knowing why, perhaps owing to an obscure presentiment, the instinct of the deceived male who does not like closed doors. He had talked about her to me in a tender strain; now assuredly he was going to beat her.

He exclaimed, as he shook the lock once more:

"Pauline!"

A voice like that of a woman waking out of her sleep replied from behind the partition:

"Eh! What?"

"Didn't you hear me come in?"

"No, I was asleep! Let me rest."

"Open the door!"

"Yes, when you're alone. I don't like you to be bringing home fellows at night to drink with you."

Then I took myself off, stumbling down the stairs, just as the other man had done, whose accomplice I was. And, as I resumed my journey toward Paris, I realized that I had just witnessed in this wretched abode a scene of the eternal drama which is being enacted every day, in every form and in every class, and in every hemisphere.

A PHILOSOPHER

I HAD no secrets from Blérot, who had been my intimate friend from childhood. We were united heart and soul, like brothers, and were mutual confidants of each other's love affairs.

When he told me that he was going to get married I felt hurt, as if he had been guilty of treachery toward me. I felt that it must interfere with that cordial and absolute affection which had united us hitherto. His wife would come between us. The intimacy of marriage establishes a kind of complicity of mysterious alliance between two persons, even when they have ceased to love each other. Man and wife are like two discreet partners who will not let any one else into their secrets. But that close bond which the conjugal kiss rivets is widely loosened on the day on which the woman takes a lover.

I remember Blérot's wedding as if it were but yesterday. I would not be present at the signing of the marriage contract, as I have no

particular liking for such ceremonies, but I only went to the civil wedding and to the church.

His wife, whom I had never seen before, was a tall, slight girl, with pale hair, pale cheeks, pale hands, and eyes to match. She walked with a slightly undulating motion, as if she were on board a ship, and seemed to advance with a succession of long, graceful curtsies.

Blérot seemed very much in love with her. He looked at her constantly, and I felt a shiver of immoderate desire for her pass through my frame.

I went to see him a few days after the wedding, and he said to me:

"You do not know how happy I am; I am madly in love with her; but then she is . . . she is. . . ." He did not finish his sentence, but he put the tips of his fingers to his lips with a gesture which signified:

"Divine! delicious! perfect!" and a good deal more besides.

I asked, laughing: "What! All that?"

"Everything that you can imagine," was his answer.

He introduced me to her. She was very pleasant, on easy terms with me, as was natural, and begged me to look upon their house as my own. I felt that he, Blérot, did not belong to me any longer. Our intimacy was altogether checked, and we hardly found a word to say to each other.

I soon took my leave, and shortly afterward went to the East, and returned by way of Russia, Germany, Sweden, and Holland, after an absence of eighteen months from Paris.

The morning after my arrival, as I was walking along the boulevards to breathe the air of my

native city once more, I saw a pale man with sunken cheeks coming toward me, who was as much like Blérot as it was possible for a physically emaciated man to be to a strong, ruddy, rather stout man. I looked at him in surprise, and asked myself: "Can it possibly be he?" But he saw me, and came toward me with outstretched arms, and we embraced in the middle of the boulevard.

After we had gone up and down once or twice from the Rue Drouot to the Vaudeville Theater, as we were taking leave of each other, I said to him:

"You don't look at all well. Are you ill?"

"I do feel rather out of sorts," was all he said.

He looked like a man who was going to die, and I felt a flood of affection for my old friend, the only real friend I had ever had. I squeezed his hands.

"What is the matter with you? Are you in pain?"

"A little tired; but it is nothing."

"What does your doctor say?"

"He calls it anæmia, and has ordered me to eat no white meat and to take tincture of iron."

A suspicion flashed across me.

"Are you happy?" I asked him.

"Yes, very happy; my wife is charming, and I love her more than ever."

But I noticed that he grew rather red and seemed embarrassed, as if he were afraid of any further questions, so I took him by the arm and pushed him into a café, which was nearly empty at that time of day. I forced him to sit down, and, looking him straight in the face, I said:

"Look here, old fellow, just tell me the exact truth."

"I have nothing to tell you," he stammered.

"That is not true," I replied firmly. "You are ill, mentally perhaps, and you dare not reveal your secret to any one. Something or other is injuring your health, and I mean you to tell me what it is. Come, I am waiting for you to begin."

Again he got very red, stammered, and, turning his head away, said:

"It is very idiotic—but I—I am done for!"

As he did not go on, I said:

"Just tell me what it is."

"Well, it is my wife—that is all," he said abruptly, almost desperately.

I did not understand at first. "Does she make you unhappy? How? What is it?"

"No," he replied, in a low voice, as if he were confessing some crime; "I love her too much, that is all."

I was thunderstruck at this brutal avowal, and then I felt inclined to laugh, but at length managed to reply:

"But surely, at least so it seems to me, you might manage to—to love her a little less."

He had grown very pale again, and at length made up his mind to speak to me frankly, as he used to do formerly.

"No," he said, "that is impossible; and I am dying from it, I know; it is killing me, and I am really frightened. Some days, like to-day, I feel inclined to leave her, to go away altogether, to start for the other end of the world, so as to live for a long time; and then, when the evening comes, I return home in spite of myself, but slowly, and feeling uncomfortable. I go upstairs hesitatingly and ring, and when I go in I see her there sitting in her easy-chair, and she says: 'How late you

are!' I kiss her, and we sit down to dinner. During the meal I think to myself: 'I will go directly it is over, and take the train for somewhere, no matter where;' but when we get back to the drawing-room I am so tired that I have not the courage to get up out of my chair, and so I remain, and then—and then—I succumb again."

I could not help smiling again. He saw it, and said: "You may laugh, but I assure you it is very horrible."

"Why don't you tell your wife?" I asked him. "Unless she be a regular monster she would understand."

He shrugged his shoulders. "It is all very well for you to talk. I don't tell her because I know her nature. Have you ever heard it said of certain women, 'She has just married a third time?' Well, that makes you laugh as you did just now, and yet it is true. What is to be done? It is neither her fault nor mine. She is so because nature has made her so; I assure you, my dear old friend, she has the temperament of a Messalina. She does not know it, but I do; so much the worse for me. She seems like an ignorant schoolgirl, and she really is ignorant, poor child.

"Every day I form energetic resolutions, for you must understand that I am dying. But one look of her eyes, one of those looks in which I can read the ardent desire of her lips, is enough for me, and I succumb at once, saying to myself: 'This is really the end; I will have no more of her death-giving kisses,' and then, when I have yielded again, as I have to-day, I go out and walk on ahead, thinking of death, and saying to myself that I am lost, that all is over.

"I am so mentally ill that I went for a walk to Père Lachaise cemetery yesterday. I looked at all the graves, standing in a row like dominoes, and thought to myself: 'I shall soon be there,' and then I returned home, quite determined to pretend to be ill, and so escape, but I could not.

"Oh! You don't know what it is. Ask a smoker who is poisoning himself with nicotine whether he can give up his delicious and deadly habit. He will tell you that he has tried a hundred times without success, and he will, perhaps, add: 'More's the pity, but I had rather die than go without tobacco.' That is just the case with me. When once one is in the clutches of such a passion or such a vice, one gives one's self up to it entirely."

He got up and gave me his hand. I was seized with a tumult of rage, and with hatred for this woman, this careless, charming, terrible woman; and as Blérot was buttoning up his coat to go out I said to him, brutally perhaps:

"But, in God's name, why don't you let her have a lover, rather than kill yourself like that?"

He shrugged his shoulders without replying, and went off.

For six months I did not see him. Every morning I expected a letter of invitation to his funeral, but would not go to his house from a complicated feeling of contempt for him and for that woman, a feeling of anger, indignation, of a thousand sensations.

One lovely spring morning I was walking in the Champs Elysées. It was one of those warm days which make our eyes bright and stir in us a tumultuous feeling of happiness from the mere sense of existence. Some one tapped me on the shoulder,

and, turning round, I saw my old friend, looking well, stout, and rosy.

He gave me both hands, beaming with pleasure, and exclaimed:

"Here you are, you erratic individual!"

I looked at him, utterly thunderstruck.

"Well, on my word—yes. By Jove! I congratulate you; you have indeed changed in the last six months!"

He flushed scarlet, and said, with an embarrassed laugh:

"One can but do one's best."

I looked at him so persistently that he evidently felt uncomfortable, and I went on:

"So—now—you are—completely cured?"

He stammered, hastily:

"Yes, perfectly, thank you." Then, changing his tone: "How lucky that I should have come across you, old fellow! I hope we shall often meet now."

But I would not give up my idea; I wanted to know how matters really stood, and I asked:

"Don't you remember what you told me six months ago? I suppose—I—eh—suppose you control yourself now?"

"Please don't talk any more about it," he replied uneasily; "forget that I mentioned it to you. But I have no intention of letting you go; you must come and dine at my house."

A sudden fancy took me to see for myself how matters stood, so that I might understand all about it, and I accepted.

His wife received me in a most charming manner, and she was, in fact, a most attractive woman. Her long hands and her neck and cheeks were beau-

tifully white and delicate, and marked her breeding, and her walk was undulating and delightful.

René gave her a brotherly kiss on the forehead and said:

"Has not Lucien come yet?"

"Not yet," she replied, in a clear, soft voice; "you know he is almost always rather late."

At that moment the bell rang, and a tall man was shown in. He was dark, with a thick beard, and looked like a modern Hercules. We were introduced to each other; his name was Lucien Delabarre.

René and he shook hands in a most friendly manner, and then we went to dinner.

It was a most enjoyable meal, without the least constraint. My old friend spoke with me constantly, in the old familiar, cordial manner, just as he used to do. It was: "You know, old fellow!" "I say, old fellow!" "Just listen a moment, old fellow!" Suddenly he exclaimed:

"You don't know how glad I am to see you again; it takes me back to old times."

I looked at his wife and the other man. Their attitude was perfectly correct, though I fancied once or twice that they exchanged a rapid and furtive glance.

As soon as dinner was over René turned to his wife, and said:

"My dear, I have just met Pierre again, and I am going to carry him off for a walk and a chat along the boulevards to remind us of old times. I am leaving you in very good company."

The young woman smiled, and said to me, as she shook hands with me:

"Don't keep him too long."

As we went along, arm in arm, I could not help

saying to him, for I was determined to know how matters stood:

"I say, what has happened? Do tell me!"

He, however, interrupted me roughly, and answered like a man who has been disturbed without any reason.

"Just look here, old fellow; let a man alone with your questions."

Then he added, half aloud, as if talking to himself:

"After all, it would have been too stupid to have let one's self be killed like that."

I did not press him. We walked on quickly and began to talk. All of a sudden he whispered in my ear:

"I say, suppose we go and have a bottle of 'fizz' with some girls! Eh?"

I could not prevent myself from laughing heartily.

"Just as you like; come along, let us go."

WHAT WAS THE MATTER WITH ANDREW

THE lawyer's house looked out on the square. Behind it there was a well-kept garden, with a back entrance into a narrow street which was almost always deserted, and from which it was separated by a wall.

At the bottom of that garden Maître Moreau's wife had promised, for the first time, to meet Captain Sommerive, who had been making love to her for a long time.

Her husband had gone to Paris for a week, so she was quite free for the time being. The Captain had begged so hard, and had used such loving words; she was certain that he loved her ardently, and she felt so isolated, so misunderstood, so neglected amid all the law business which seemed to be her husband's sole pleasure, that she had given away her heart without even asking herself whether it would give her anything else at some future time.

Then, after some months of platonic love, of pressing of hands, of kisses rapidly stolen behind a door, the Captain had declared that he would ask permission to exchange, and leave the town immediately, if she would not grant him a meeting, a real meeting, during her husband's absence; and so at length she yielded to his importunity.

Just then she was waiting, close against the wall, with a beating heart, trembling at the slightest sound, and when at last she heard somebody climbing up the wall, she very nearly ran away, but controlled herself and stayed.

Suppose it were not he, but a thief? But no; some one called out softly, "Matilda!" and when

she replied, "Etienne!" a man jumped on to the path with a crash.

It was he—and what a kiss!

For a long time they remained in each other's arms. But suddenly a fine rain began to fall, and the drops from the leaves fell on her neck and made her start. Whereupon he said:

"Matilda, my adored one, my darling, my angel, let us go indoors. It is twelve o'clock; we can have nothing to fear."

"No, dearest; I am too frightened."

But he held her in his arms, and whispered in her ear:

"Your servants sleep on the third floor, looking out on the square, and your room, on the first, looks on to the garden, so nobody can hear us. I love you so that I wish to love you entirely, from head to foot." And he kissed her fervently.

She resisted still, frightened and even ashamed. But he put his arms round her, lifted her up, and carried her out of the rain, which was by this time descending in torrents.

The door was open; they groped their way upstairs, and when they were in the room he bolted the door while she lit a match.

Then she fell, half fainting, into a chair, while he knelt down beside her.

At last she said, panting:

"No! no! Etienne, please let me remain a virtuous woman. This is so horrid, so common. Cannot we love each other with a spiritual love only? . . . Oh! Etienne!"

But he was beyond reasoning with, and she got up and tried to escape him, by hiding behind the curtains of the bedstead. As he hastily followed

her his belt, which was loose, slipped off and his sword fell to the floor with a crash.

A prolonged, shrill infant's cry came from the next room, the door of which had remained open.

"You have awakened the child," she whispered, "and perhaps he will not go to sleep again."

He was only fifteen months old, and slept in a room opening out of hers, so that she might be able to hear him.

The Captain exclaimed ardently:

"What does it matter, Matilda? How I love you! Come to me, Matilda."

But she struggled, and resisted in her fright.

"No! no! Just listen how he is crying; he will wake up the nurse, and what should we do if she were to come? We should be lost. Just listen to me, Etienne. When he screams at night his father always takes him into our bed, and he is quiet immediately; it is the only means of keeping him still. Do let me take him. . . ."

The child roared, uttered shrill screams, which pierced the thickest walls, so as to be heard by passers-by in the streets.

In his consternation, Etienne allowed her to go and get the child, which she brought in and placed on the bed, when he was quiet at once.

Etienne sat astride a chair and made a cigarette, and in five minutes Andrew went to sleep again.

"I will take him back," his mother said; and she took him back very carefully to his bed.

When she returned, the Captain was waiting for her with open arms, and put his arms round her in a transport of love, while she said, stammering:

"Oh! Etienne, my darling, if you only knew how I love you; how . . ."

Andrew began to cry again, and he, in a rage, exclaimed:

"Confound it all, won't the little brute be quiet?"

No, the little brute would not be quiet, but, on the contrary, howled all the louder.

Matilda thought she heard a noise downstairs; no doubt the nurse was coming, so she jumped up and took the child into bed, and he grew quiet directly.

Three times she put him back, and three times she had to fetch him again, and an hour before daybreak the Captain had to go, swearing like the proverbial trooper; and, to calm his impatience, Matilda said he might come again the next night.

Of course he came, more impatient and ardent than ever, excited by the delay.

He took care to put his sword carefully into a corner; he took off his boots like a thief, and spoke so low that Matilda could hardly hear him. But just as he thought all was quiet a cry, feeble at first, but which grew louder every moment, made itself heard. Andrew was awake again.

He uttered little spasmodic wails, and there was not the slightest doubt that if he went on like that the whole house would awake; so his mother, not knowing what to do, went and brought him in. The Captain was more furious than ever, but did not move, and very carefully he put out his hand, took a small piece of the child's skin between his two fingers, no matter where it was, the thighs or elsewhere, and pinched it. The little one struggled and screamed in a deafening manner, but his tormentor pinched everywhere furiously and more vigorously. He took a morsel of flesh and twisted and turned it,

and then let go in order to take hold of another piece, and then another and another.

The child screamed like a chicken that is having its throat cut, or a dog that is being mercilessly beaten. His mother caressed him, kissed him, and tried to stifle his cries by her tenderness; but Andrew grew purple, as if he were going into convulsions, and kicked and struggled with his little arms and legs in an alarming manner.

The Captain said softly:

"Try and take him back to his cradle; perhaps he will be quiet."

And Matilda went into the other room with the child in her arms.

As soon as he was out of his mother's bed he cried less loudly, and when he was in his own he was quiet, with the exception of a few broken sobs.

The rest of the night was tranquil.

The next night Etienne came again. As he happened to speak rather loudly, Andrew awoke again and began to scream. His mother went and fetched him immediately, but the Captain pinched so hard and long that the child was nearly suffocated by its cries, and its eyes turned in its head and it foamed at the mouth; as soon as it was back in its cradle it was quiet, and in four days Andrew did not cry any more to come into his mother's bed.

On Saturday evening the lawyer returned and took his place again at the domestic hearth.

As he was tired with his journey he went to bed early; but he had not long lain down when he said to his wife:

"Why, how is it that Andrew is not crying? Just go and fetch him, Matilda; I like to feel that he is between us."

She got up and brought the child, but as soon as he saw that he was in that bed, in which he had been so fond of sleeping a few days previously, he wriggled and screamed so violently in his fright that she had to take him back to his cradle.

M. Moreau could not get over his surprise. "What a very funny thing! What is the matter with him this evening? I suppose he is sleepy?"

"He has been like that all the time that you were away; I have never been able to have him in bed with me once."

In the morning the child woke up and began to laugh and play with his toys.

The lawyer, who was an affectionate man, got up, kissed his offspring, and took him into his arms to carry him to their bed. Andrew laughed, with the vacant laugh of little creatures whose ideas are still vague. He suddenly saw the bed and his mother in it, and his happy little face puckered up, till suddenly he began to scream furiously, and struggled as if he were going to be put to the torture.

In his astonishment his father said:

"There must be something the matter with the child," and mechanically he lifted up his little night-shirt.

He uttered a prolonged "O—o—h!" of astonishment. The child's calves, thighs, and legs were covered with blue spots as big as halfpennies.

"Just look, Matilda!" the father exclaimed; "this is horrible!" And the mother rushed forward in a fright. It was horrible; no doubt the beginning of some sort of leprosy, of one of those strange affections of the skin which doctors are often at a loss to account for.

The parents looked at one another in consternation.

"We must send for the doctor," the father said.

But Matilda, pale as death, was looking at her child, who was spotted like a leopard. Then, suddenly uttering a violent cry as if she had seen something that filled her with horror, she exclaimed:

"Oh! the wretch!"

In his astonishment M. Moreau asked: "What are you talking about? What wretch?"

She got red up to the roots of her hair, and stammered:

"Oh, nothing! but I think I can guess—it must be—we ought to send for the doctor . . . it must be that wretch of a nurse who has been pinching the poor child to make him keep quiet when he cries."

In his rage the lawyer sent for the nurse, and very nearly beat her. She denied it most impudently, but was instantly dismissed, and the Municipality having been informed of her conduct, she will find it a hard matter to get another situation.

CHRISTMAS EVE

"A CHRISTMAS-EVE supper! No, never again," said Henri Templier, in a furious tone, as if some one had suggested his participation in some crime. The others laughed and said:

"Why do you fly into a rage?"

"Because a Christmas-eve supper played me the dirtiest trick in the world, and ever since I have felt an insurmountable horror for that night of imbecile gayety."

"Tell us about it!"

"You want to know what it was? Very well, then; just listen.

"You remember how cold it was two years ago at Christmas; cold enough to kill people in the streets. The Seine was covered with ice; the pavements froze one's feet through the soles of one's boots, and the whole world seemed to be about to come to an end.

"I had a big piece of work on, and so I refused every invitation to supper, as I preferred to spend the night at my writing table. I dined alone and then began to work. But about ten o'clock I grew restless at the thought of the gay and busy life all over Paris, at the noise in the streets which reached me in spite of everything, at the sound of my neighbors' preparations for supper, which I heard through the walls. I hardly knew any longer what I was doing; I wrote nonsense, and at last came to the conclusion that I had better give up all hope of producing any good work that night.

"I walked up and down my room; I sat down and got up again. I was certainly under the mysterious influence of the merriment outside, and I resigned myself to it. I rang for my servant and said to her:

"'Angela, go and get a good supper for two; some oysters, a cold partridge, some crayfish, ham, and some cakes. Put out two bottles of champagne, lay the cloth, and go to bed.'

"She obeyed in some surprise, and when all was ready I put on my greatcoat and went out. A great question was to be solved: 'Whom was I going to bring in to supper?' My female friends had all been invited elsewhere, and if I had wished to invite one, I ought to have seen about it beforehand, so, thinking that I would do a good action, I said to myself:

"'Paris is full of poor and pretty girls who will have nothing on their table to-night, and who are on the look-out for some generous fellow. I will act the part of Providence to one of them this evening; and I will find one if I have to go into every pleasure resort and have to question them and hunt till

I find one to my choice.' And I started off on my search.

"I certainly found many poor girls who were on the look-out for some adventure, but they were ugly enough to give any man a fit of indigestion, or thin enough to freeze on the spot if they had stood still. You all know that I have a weakness for stout women; the more *embonpoint* they have, the better I like them, and a female colossus would drive me out of my senses with delight.

"Suddenly, opposite the Théâtre des Variétés, I saw a profile to my liking. A good head and a full figure. I was charmed, and said:

"'By Jove! What a fine girl!'

"It only remained for me to see her face. A woman's face is the dessert, while the rest is . . . the roast.

"I hastened on and overtook her, and turned round suddenly under a gas lamp. She was charming, quite young, dark, with large black eyes, and I immediately invited her to supper. She accepted without any hesitation, and a quarter of an hour later we were sitting at supper in my lodgings. 'Oh, how comfortable it is here!' she said as she came in, and she looked about her with evident satisfaction at having found a supper and a room on that bitter night. She was superb, so beautiful that she astonished me, and her figure fairly captivated me.

"She took off her cloak and hat, sat down, and began to eat; but she seemed in low spirits, and sometimes her pale face twitched as if she were suffering from some hidden sorrow.

"'Have you anything troubling you?' I asked her.

"'Bah! Don't let us think of troubles!'

"And she began to drink. She emptied her champagne glass at a draught, filled it again, and emptied it again, without stopping, and soon color came into her cheeks, and she began to laugh.

"I adored her already, kissed her continually, and discovered that she was neither stupid, nor common, nor coarse as some ordinary girls are. I asked her for some details of her life, but she replied:

"'My little fellow, that is no business of yours!' Alas! an hour later. . . .

"At last it was time to go to bed, and while I was clearing the table, which had been laid in front of the fire, she undressed herself quickly, and got in. My neighbors were making a terrible din, singing and laughing like lunatics, and so I said to myself:

"'I was quite right to go out and bring in this girl; I should never have been able to do any work.'

"At that moment, however, a deep groan made me look round, and I said:

"'What is the matter with you, my dear?'

"She did not reply, but continued to utter painful sighs, as if she were suffering horribly, and I continued:

"'Do you feel ill?' And suddenly she uttered a cry, a heartrending cry, and I rushed up to the bed, with a candle in my hand.

"Her face was distorted with pain, and she was wringing her hands, panting and uttering long, deep groans, which sounded like a rattle in the throat, and which are so painful to hear, and I asked her in consternation:

"'What is the matter with you? Do tell me what is the matter.'

"'Oh! my stomach! my stomach!' she said. I pulled up the bedclothes, and I saw. . . . My friends, she was in labor.

"Then I lost my head, and I ran and knocked at the wall with my fists, shouting: 'Help! help!'

"My door was opened almost immediately, and a crowd of people came in, men in evening dress, women in low necks, harlequins, Turks, musketeers, and this inroad startled me so that I could not explain myself, and they, who had thought that some accident had happened, or that a crime had been committed, could not understand what was the matter. At last, however, I managed to say:

"'This . . . this . . . woman . . . is being confined.'

"Then they looked at her and gave their opinion, and a friar, especially, declared that he knew all about it, and wished to assist nature, but as they were all as drunk as pigs, I was afraid that they would kill her, and I rushed downstairs without my hat, to fetch an old doctor who lived in the next street. When I came back with him the whole house was up; the gas on the stairs had been relighted, the lodgers from every floor were in my room, while four boatmen were finishing my champagne and lobsters.

"As soon as they saw me they raised a loud shout, and a milkmaid presented me with a horrible little wrinkled specimen of humanity, that was mewing like a cat, and said to me:

"'It is a girl.'

"The doctor examined the woman, declared that she was in a dangerous state, as the event had occurred immediately after supper, and he took his leave, saying he would immediately send a sick

nurse and a wet nurse, and an hour later the two women came, bringing all that was requisite with them.

"I spent the night in my armchair, too distracted to be able to think of the consequences, and almost as soon as it was light, the doctor came again, who found his patient very ill, and said to me:

"'Your wife, Monsieur. . . .'

"'She is not my wife,' I interrupted him.

"'Very well, then, your mistress; it does not matter to me.'

"He told me what must be done for her, what her diet must be, and then wrote a prescription.

"What was I to do? Could I send the poor creature to the hospital? I should have been looked upon as a brute in the house and in all the neighborhood, and so I kept her in my rooms, and she had my bed for six weeks.

"I sent the child to some peasants at Poissy to be taken care of, and she still costs me fifty francs a month, for as I had paid at first, I shall be obliged to go on paying as long as I live, and later on she will believe that I am her father. But to crown my misfortunes, when the girl had recovered . . . I found that she was in love with me, madly in love with me, the baggage!"

"Well?"

"Well, she had grown as thin as a homeless cat, and I turned the skeleton out of doors, but she watches for me in the streets, hides herself, so that she may see me pass, stops me in the evening when I go out, in order to kiss my hand, and, in fact, worries me enough to drive me mad; and that is why I never keep Christmas eve now."

WORDS OF LOVE

" Sunday.

I NEVER see you, you do not write to me, you never come, so I must suppose that you have ceased to love me. But why? What have I done? Pray tell me, my own dear love. I love you so much, so dearly! I should like always to have you near me, to kiss you all day while I called you every tender name that I could think of. I adore you, I adore you, I adore you, my beautiful cock. Your affectionate hen,

" Sophie."

" Monday.

" My Dear Friend: You will absolutely understand nothing of what I am going to say to you, but that does not matter, and if my letter happens to be read by another woman, it may be profitable to her.

" Had you been deaf and dumb, I should no doubt have loved you for a very long time, and the

cause of that which has happened is that you can talk; that is all.

"In love, you see, dreams are always songs, but in order that they may be so, they must not be interrupted; and when one talks between two kisses, one always interrupts that frenzied dream which our souls indulge in, unless one utters sublime words; and sublime words do not come out of the little mouths of pretty girls.

"You do not understand me at all, do you? So much the better, and I will go on. You are certainly one of the most charming and adorable women whom I have ever seen.

"Are there any eyes on earth that contain more dreams than yours, more unknown promises, greater depths of love? I do not think so. And when that mouth of yours, with its two round lips, smiles, and shows the glittering white teeth, one is tempted to say that there issues from this ravishing mouth ineffable music, something inexpressibly delicate, a sweetness which makes us sob.

"Then you call me your 'beloved big rabbit,' and then it seems to me as though I had suddenly found an entrance into your thoughts, that I can see your soul—that little soul of a pretty little creature—yes, pretty, but—and that is what troubles me, don't you see, troubles me more than tongue can tell. I would much prefer never to see you at all.

"You go on pretending not to understand anything, do you not? I counted on that.

"Do you remember the first time you came to see me at my residence? How gayly you stepped inside, an odor of violets, which clung to your dress, heralding your entrance; how we looked at each

other, for ever so long, without uttering a word, after which we embraced like two fools . . . then . . . then, from that time to this, we have never exchanged a word.

" But when we separated did not our trembling hands and our eyes say many things, things . . . which cannot be expressed in any language. At least, I thought so; and when you went away, you murmured:

" ' We shall meet again soon! '

" That was all you said, and you will never guess what delightful dreams you left me, all that I, as it were, caught a glimpse of, all that I fancied I could guess in your thoughts.

" You see, my poor child, for men who are not stupid, who are rather refined and somewhat superior, love is such a complicated instrument that the merest trifle puts it out of order. You women never perceive the ridiculous side of certain things when you love, and you fail to see the grotesqueness of some expressions.

" Why does a word which sounds quite right in the mouth of a small, dark woman seem quite wrong and funny in the mouth of a fat, light-haired woman? Why are the wheedling ways of the one altogether out of place in the other?

" Why is it that certain caresses which are delightful from the one should be wearisome from the other? Why? Because in everything, and especially in love, perfect harmony, absolute agreement in motion, voice, words, and in demonstrations of tenderness, are necessary, according to age, height, the color of the hair, and the style of beauty.

" If a woman of thirty-five, who has arrived at the age of violent, tempestuous passion, were to pre-

serve the slightest traces of the caressing archness of her love affairs at twenty, were not to understand that she ought to express herself differently, look at her lover differently and kiss him differently, were not to see that she ought to be a Dido and not a Juliet, she would infallibly disgust nine lovers out of ten, even if they could not account to themselves for their estrangement. Do you understand me? No. I hoped so.

" From the time that you turned on your tap of tenderness, it was all over for me, my dear friend. Sometimes we would embrace for five minutes, in one interminable kiss, one of those kisses which make lovers close their eyes, as if part of it would escape through their looks, as if to preserve it entire in that clouded soul which it is ravaging. And then, when our lips separated, you would say to me:

" ' That was nice, you fat old dog! '

" At such moments I could have beaten you; for you gave me successively all the names of animals and vegetables which you doubtless found in some cookery book or gardener's manual. But that is nothing.

" The caresses of love are brutal, bestial, and if one comes to think of it, grotesque! . . . Oh! My poor child, what joking elf, what perverse sprite could have prompted the concluding words of your letters to me? I have made a collection of them, but out of love for you I will not show them to you.

" And you really sometimes said things which were quite inopportune, and you managed now and then to let out an exalted *I love you!* on such singular occasions that I was obliged to restrain a strong desire to laugh. There are times when the words

I love you! are so out of place that they become indecent; let me tell you that.

"But you do not understand me, and many other women will also not understand me and think me stupid, though that matters very little to me. Hungry men eat like gluttons, but people of refinement are often disgusted and feel an invincible dislike for a dish on account of a mere trifle. It is the same with love as it is with cookery.

"What I cannot comprehend, for example, is that certain women who fully understand the irresistible attraction of fine, embroidered stockings, the exquisite charm of shades, the witchery of valuable lace concealed in the depths of their underclothing, the exciting zest of hidden luxury, and all the subtle delicacies of female elegance, never understand the invincible disgust with which words that are out of place, or foolishly tender, inspire us.

"At times coarse and brutal expressions work wonders, as they excite the senses and make the heart beat, and they are allowable at the hours of combat.

"Nothing shocks us that comes at the right time; but then, we must also know when to hold our tongue and to avoid phrases *à la Paul de Kock* at certain moments.

"And I embrace you passionately on the condition that you say nothing,

"René."

THE CHILD

EMONNIER had remained a widower with one child. He had loved his wife devotedly, with a tender and exalted love, without a slip, during their entire married life. He was a good, honest man, perfectly simple, sincere, without suspicion or malice.

He fell in love with a poor neighbor, proposed and was accepted. He was making a very comfortable living out of the wholesale cloth business, and he did not for a minute suspect that the young girl might have accepted him for anything else but himself.

She made him happy. She was everything to him; he only thought of her, looked at her continually, with worshiping eyes. During meals he would make any number of blunders, in order not to have to take his eyes from the beloved face; he would pour the wine in his plate and the water in the salt-cellar, then he would laugh like a child, repeating:

"You see, I love you too much; that makes me crazy."

She would smile with a calm and resigned look; then she would look away, as though embarrassed by the adoration of her husband, and try to make him talk about something else; but he would take her hand under the table and he would hold it in his, whispering:

"My little Jeanne, my darling little Jeanne!"

She sometimes lost patience and said:

"Come, come, be reasonable; eat and let me eat."

He would sigh and break off a mouthful of bread, which he would then chew slowly.

For five years they had no children. Then suddenly she announced to him that this state of affairs would soon cease. He was wild with joy. He no longer left her for a minute, until his old nurse, who had brought him up and who often ruled the house, would push him out and close the door behind him, in order to compel him to go out in the fresh air.

He had grown very intimate with a young man who had known his wife since childhood, and who was one of the prefect's secretaries. M. Duretour would dine three times a week with the Lemonniers, bringing flowers to Madame, and sometimes a box at the theater; and often, at the end of the dinner, Lemonnier, growing tender, turning toward his wife, would explain: "With a companion like you and a friend like him, a man is completely happy on earth."

She died in childbirth. The shock almost killed him. But the sight of the child, a poor, moaning little creature, gave him courage.

He loved it with a passionate and sorrowful love,

with a morbid love in which stuck the memory of death, but in which lived something of his worship for the dead mother. It was the flesh of his wife, her being continued, a sort of quintessence of herself. This child was her very life transferred to another body; she had disappeared that it might exist, and the father would smother it in with kisses. But also, this child had killed her; he had stolen this beloved creature; his life was due to hers. And M. Lemonnier would place his son in the cradle and would sit down and watch him. He would sit this way by the hour, looking at him, dreaming of thousands of things, sweet or sad. Then, when the little one was asleep, he would bend over him and sob.

* * * * * * *

The child grew. The father could no longer spend an hour away from him; he would stay near him, take him out for walks, and himself dress him, wash him, make him eat. His friend M. Duretour also seemed to love the boy; he would kiss him wildly, in those frenzies of tenderness which are characteristic of parents. He would toss him in his arms, he would trot him on his knees, by the hour, and M. Lemonnier, delighted, would mutter:

"Isn't he a darling? Isn't he a darling?"

And M. Duretour would hug the child in his arms and tickle his neck with his mustache.

Alone, Céleste, the old nurse, seemed to have no tenderness for the little one. She would grow angry at his pranks, and she seemed impatient at the caresses of the two men. She would exclaim:

"How can you expect to bring a child up like that? You'll make a perfect monkey out of him."

Years went by, and Jean was nine years old. He

hardly knew how to read; he had been so spoiled, and always did as he saw fit. He was wilful, stubborn and quick-tempered. The father always gave in to him and let him have his own way. M. Duretour would always buy and give him all the toys which he wished, and he fed him on cake and candies. Then Céleste would grow angry and exclaim:

"It's a shame, Monsieur, a shame. You are spoiling this child. But it will have to stop; yes, sir, I tell you it will have to stop, and before long, too."

M. Lemonnier would answer, smiling:

"What can you expect? I love him too much, I can't resist him; you must get used to it."

* * * * * * *

Jean was weak, slightly sick. The doctor said that he was anæmic, prescribed iron, underdone meat and broth.

But the little fellow loved only cake and refused all other nourishment; and the father, in despair, stuffed him with cream-puffs and chocolate éclairs.

One evening, as they were sitting down to supper, Céleste brought on the soup with an air of authority and an assurance which she did not usually have. She took off the cover and dipping the ladle into the dish, she declared:

"Here is some broth such as I have never made; the young one will have to take some this time."

M. Lemonnier, frightened, bent his head. He saw a storm brewing.

Céleste took his plate, filled it herself and placed it in front of him.

He tasted the soup and said:

"It is, indeed, excellent."

The servant took the boy's plate and poured a

spoonful of soup in it. Then she retreated a few steps and waited.

Jean smelled the food and pushed his plate away with an expression of disgust. Céleste, suddenly pale, quickly stepped forward and forcibly poured a spoonful down the child's open mouth.

He choked, coughed, sneezed, spat; howling, he seized his glass and threw it at his nurse. She received it full in the stomach. Then, exasperated, she took the young shaver's head under her arm and began pouring spoonful after spoonful of soup down his throat. He grew as red as a beet, and he would cough it up, stamping, twisting, choking, beating the air with his hands.

At first the father was so surprised that he could not move. Then, suddenly, he rushed forward, wild with rage, seized the servant by the throat and threw her up against the wall stammering:

"Out! Out! Out! you brute!"

But she shook him off, and, her hair streaming down her back, her eyes snapping, she cried out:

"What's getting hold of you? You're trying to thrash me because I am making this child eat soup when you are filling him with sweet stuff!"

He kept repeating, trembling from head to foot:

"Out!—Get out—get out, you brute!"

Then, wild, she turned to him and, pushing her face up against his, her voice trembling:

"Ah!—you think—you think that you can treat me like that? Oh! no. And for whom?—for that brat who is not even yours. No, not yours! No, not yours—not yours! Everybody knows it, except yourself! Ask the grocer, the butcher, the baker, all of them, any one of them!"

She was growling and mumbling, choked with passion; then she stopped and looked at him.

He was motionless, livid, his arms hanging by his sides. After a short pause, he murmured in a faint, shaky voice, instinct with deep feeling:

"You say? you say? What do you say?"

She remained silent, frightened by his appearance. Once more he stepped forward, repeating:

"You say? you say. What do you say?"

Then in a calm voice, she answered:

"I say what I know, what everybody knows."

He seized her and, with the fury of a beast, he tried to throw her down. But, although old, she was strong and nimble. She slipped under his arm, and running around the table once more furious, she screamed:

"Look at him, just look at him, fool that you are! Isn't he the image of Monsieur Duretour? Just look at his nose and his eyes! Are yours like that? And his hair! Is it like his mother's? I tell you that everyone knows it, everyone except yourself! It's the joke of the town! Look at him!—"

She went to the door, opened it, and disappeared.

Jean, frightened, sat motionless before his plate of soup.

* * * * * * *

At the end of an hour, she returned gently, to see how matters stood. The child, after doing away with all the cakes and a pitcher full of cream and of syrup, was now emptying the jam-pot with his soup-spoon.

The father had gone out.

Céleste took the child, kissed him, and gently carried him to his room and put him to bed. She came back to the dining-room, cleared the table, put everything in place, feeling very uneasy all the time.

Not a single sound could be heard throughout the house. She put her ear against her master's door. He seemed to be perfectly still. She put her eye to the keyhole. He was writing, and seemed very calm.

Then she returned to the kitchen and sat down, ready for any emergency. She slept on a chair and awoke at daylight.

She did the rooms as she had been accustomed to every morning; she swept and dusted, and, towards eight o'clock, she prepared M. Lemonnier's breakfast.

But she did not dare bring it to her master, knowing too well how she would be received; she waited for him to ring. But he did not ring. Nine o'clock, then ten o'clock went by.

Céleste, not knowing what to think, prepared her tray and started up with it, her heart beating fast.

She stopped before the door and listened. Everything was still. She knocked; no answer. Then, gathering up all her courage, she opened the door and entered; then with a wild shriek, she dropped the breakfast tray which she had been holding in her hand.

In the middle of the room, M. Lemonnier was hanging by a rope from a ring in the ceiling. His tongue was sticking out horribly. His right slipper

was lying on the ground, his left one still on his foot. An upturned chair had rolled over to the bed.

Céleste, dazed, ran away shrieking. All the neighbors crowded together. The physician declared that he had died at about midnight.

A letter addressed to M. Duretour was found on the table of the suicide. It contained these words:

"I leave and entrust the child to you!"

THE SUBSTITUTE

MADAME BONDEROI?"

"Yes, Madame Bonderoi."

"Impossible."

"I tell you it is."

"Madame Bonderoi, the old lady in a lace cap, the devout, pious, honorable Madame Bonderoi, whose little false curls looked as if they were glued to her head."

"That is the very woman."

"Oh! Come, you must be mad."

"I swear to you that it is Madame Bonderoi."

"Then please give me the details."

"Here they are. During the life of Monsieur Bonderoi, the lawyer, people said that she utilized his clerks for her own particular service. She is one of those respectable middle-class women, with secret vices and inflexible principles, of whom there are so many. She liked good-looking young fellows,

and I should like to know what is more natural than that? Do not we all like pretty girls?

"As soon as old Bonderoi was dead his widow began to live the peaceful and irreproachable life of a woman with a fair, fixed income. She went to church assiduously, and spoke evil of her neighbors, but gave no handle to any one to speak ill of her, and when she grew old she became the little wizened, sour-faced, mischievous woman whom you know. Well, this adventure, which you would scarcely believe, happened last Friday.

"My friend, Jean d'Anglemare, is, as you know, a captain in a dragoon regiment, and is quartered in the barracks in the Rue de la Rivette, and when he got to his quarters the other morning he found that two men of his squadron had had a terrible quarrel. The rules of military honor are very strict, and so they fought a duel. After the duel they became reconciled, and when their officer questioned them they told him what their quarrel had been about. They had fought on Madame Bonderoi's account."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, my dear fellow, about Madame Bonderoi.

"But I will let Trooper Siballe speak:

"'This is how it was, Captain. About a year and a half ago I was lounging about the barrack-yard, between six and seven o'clock in the evening, when a woman came up and spoke to me, and said, just as if she had been asking her way: "Soldier, would you like to earn ten francs a week, honestly?" Of course, I told her that I decidedly should, and so she said: "Come and see me at twelve o'clock tomorrow morning. I am Madame Bonderoi, and my address is No. 6, Rue de la Tranchée." "You

may rely upon my being there, Madame." And as she went away, looking very pleased, she added: "I am very much obliged to you, soldier." "I am obliged to you, Madame," I replied. But I plagued my head about the matter until the time came, all the same.

"'At twelve o'clock exactly I rang the bell, and she let me in herself. She had a lot of ribbons on her head.

"'"We must make haste," she said; "as my servant might come in."

"'"I am quite willing to make haste," I replied, "but what am I to do?"

"'She only laughed, and replied: "Don't you understand, you great, knowing fellow?"

"'I was no nearer her meaning, I give you my word of honor, Captain, but she came and sat down by me, and said:

"'"If you mention this to any one I will have you put in prison, so swear that you will never open your lips about it."

"'I swore whatever she liked, though I did not at all understand what she meant, and my forehead was covered with perspiration; so I took my pocket-handkerchief out of my helmet, and she took it and wiped my brow with it; then she kissed me, and whispered: "Then you will?" "I will do anything you like, Madame," I replied, "as that is what I came for."

"'Then she made herself clearly understood by her actions, and when I saw what she meant, I put my helmet on a chair and showed her that in the dragoons a man never retires, Captain.

"'Not that I cared much about it, for she was certainly not in her prime, but it is no good being

too particular in such a matter, as ten francs are scarce, and then I have relations whom I like to help, and I said to myself: "There will be five francs for my father out of that."

"'When I had done my allotted task, Captain, I got ready to go, though she wanted me to stay longer, but I said to her:

"'"To every one their due, Madame. A small glass of brandy costs two sous, and two glasses cost four."

"'She understood my meaning and put a gold ten-franc piece into my hand. I do not like that coin, because it is so small that if your pockets are not very well made, and come at all unsewn, one is apt to find it in one's boots, or not to find it at all; and so, while I was looking at it, she was looking at me. She got red in the face, and she said: "Is not that enough?"

"'"I did not mean that, Madame," I replied; "but if it is all the same to you, I would rather have two five-franc pieces." And she gave them to me, and I took my leave. This has been going on for a year and a half, Captain. I go every Tuesday evening, when you give me leave to go out of barracks; she prefers that arrangement, as her servant has gone to bed then, but last week I was not well, and I had to go into the infirmary. When Tuesday came I could not get out, and I was very much annoyed, because of the ten francs which I had been receiving every week, and I said to myself:

"'"If anybody goes there I shall be done for; and she will be sure to take an artilleryman," and the idea made me very angry. So I sent for Paumelle, who comes from my part of the country, and I told him how matters stood:

"'"There will be five francs for you, and five for me," I said. He agreed, and went, as I had given him full instructions. She opened the door as soon as he knocked and let him in, and as she did not look at his face, she did not perceive that it was not I, for, you know, Captain, one dragoon is very like another, with their helmets on.

"' Suddenly, however, she noticed the change, and she asked angrily: "What are you? What do you want? I do not know you."

"' Then Paumelle explained matters; he told her that I was not well, and that I had sent him as my substitute; so she looked at him, made him also swear to keep the matter secret, and then she accepted him, as you may suppose, for Paumelle is not a bad-looking fellow, either. But when he came back, Captain, he would not give me my five francs. If they had been for myself I should not have said a word, but they were for my father, and on that score I would stand no nonsense, and I said to him:

"'"You are not particular in what you do, for a dragoon; you are a discredit to your uniform."

"' He raised his fist, Captain, saying that fatigue duty like that was worth double. Of course, everybody has his own ideas, and he ought not to have accepted it. You know the rest.'

"Captain d'Anglemar laughed until he cried as he told me the story, but he also made me promise to keep the matter a secret, just as he had promised the two soldiers. So, above all, do not betray me, but promise me to keep it to yourself."

"Oh! You may be quite easy about that. But how was it all arranged, in the end?"

"How? It is a joke in a thousand! . . . Mother Bonderoi keeps her two dragoons, and re-

serves his own particular day for each of them, and in that way everybody is satisfied."

"Oh! That is capital! Really capital."

"And he can send his old father and mother the money as usual, and thus morality is satisfied."

THE CARNIVAL OF LOVE

THE Princess Léonie was one of those beautiful, brilliant enigmas who have the irresistible attraction of a Sphinx. She was young, charming, and singularly lovely, and understood how to heighten her charms not a little by carefully chosen dresses. She was a great lady of the true stamp, and was very intellectual into the bargain, which is not always the case with women of the aristocracy. She also took great interest in art and literature, and it was even said that she patronized one of our poets in a manner worthy of the Medicis, and that she strewed the beautiful roses of womanly sympathy on his thorny path. All this was evident to every one, and had nothing strange about it; but the world would have liked to know the history of that woman, and to look into the depths of her

soul, and thought it very strange that it could not do so.

No one could read that face, which was always beautiful, always cheerful, and always the same; no one could read those large, dark, unfathomable eyes, which hid their secrets under the unvarying brilliancy of majestic repose, like a mountain lake whose waters look black on account of their depth. But every one was agreed that the beautiful Princess had her secrets, interesting and precious secrets, like all other ladies of our fashionable world.

Most people looked upon her as a flirt who had no heart, and even no blood, and they asserted that she was only virtuous because she was incapable of love, but that she took all the more pleasure in attracting admiration, and that she set her snares and enticed her victims, until they surrendered at discretion at her feet, when she would hurry off in pursuit of some fresh quarry.

Others declared that the beautiful woman had had her romances in life, and was still having them, but, like Messalina, knew how to conceal her adventures as cleverly as that French queen who had every one of her lovers thrown into the cold waters of the Seine as soon as he left her soft, warm arms. She was thus described to Count Otto F——, a handsome cavalry officer who had made the acquaintance of the beautiful, captivating woman at that fashionable watering place, Karlsbad, and had fallen deeply in love with her.

Even before he had been introduced to her the Princess had already exchanged ardent, encouraging glances with him, and when a brother officer took him to call on her she welcomed him with a

winning smile. But after he had paid his court to her for a month he did not seem to have made any progress, and as she possessed in a high degree the skill of being able to avoid even the shortest private interviews, it appeared as if matters would go no further than that delightful reception.

Night after night the enamored young officer would walk along the garden railings of her villa as close to her windows as possible without being noticed by any one, but at last fortune seemed to fa-

vor him. The moon, which was nearly full, was shining brightly, and in its silvery light he saw a tall female figure, with large braids of hair round her head, coming along the gravel path. He stood still, as he thought he recognized the Princess, but as she came nearer he saw a pretty girl whom he did not know and who came up to the railings and said to him with a smile: "What can I do for you, Count?" mentioning his name.

"You seem to know me, Fräulein."

"Oh! I am only the Princess's lady's maid."

"But you could do me a great favor."

"How?" she asked quickly.

"You might give the Princess a letter."

"I should not venture to do that," the girl replied, with a peculiar, half-mocking, half-pitying smile, and, with a deep courtesy, she disappeared behind the raspberry bushes which formed a hedge along the railings.

The next morning, as the Count, with several other ladies and gentlemen, was accompanying the Princess home from the pump-room, the fair coquette let her pocket-handkerchief fall just outside her house. The young officer, taking this for a hint, picked it up, concealed the letter that he had written and which he always kept about him so as to be prepared for any opportunity in the folds of the soft cambric handkerchief, and gave it back to the Princess, who quickly put it in her pocket. That seemed to him to be a good augury, and, in fact, in the course of a few hours he received by mail a note in disguised handwriting in which his bold wooing was graciously entertained, and an appointment was made for the same night in the pavilion of the Princess's villa.

The happiness of the enamored young officer knew no bounds; he kissed the letter a hundred times, and when he met the Princess in the afternoon where the band was playing thanked her by his animated looks, which she either did not or could not understand. That night he was standing, an hour before the appointed time, outside the wall at the end of the garden.

When the church clock struck eleven he climbed

over the wall and jumped to the ground on the other side and looked about him carefully; then he went up on tiptoe to the small whitewashed summer house, where the Princess had promised to meet him. He found the door ajar, went in, and at the same moment felt two soft arms thrown round him.

"Is it you, Princess?" he asked, in a whisper, for the pavilion was in total darkness, as the Venetian blinds were drawn.

"Yes, Count, it is I." . . .

"How cruel!"

"I love you, but I am obliged to conceal my passion under the mask of coldness because of my social position."

The lovers spent two blissful hours together, and then she bade him farewell and told him to remain where he was until she had gone back to the house. He obeyed her, but could not resist looking at her through the Venetian blinds, and he saw her tall, slim figure as she went along the gravel path with an undulating walk. She wore a white burnous, which he recognized, having seen it in the pump-room; her soft black hair fell down over her shoulders, and before she disappeared into the villa she stood for a moment and looked back, but he could not see her face, as she wore a thick veil.

When Count F—— met the Princess the next morning in company with other ladies, when the band was playing, she showed a lack of constraint which confused him, and while she was joking in the most unembarrassed manner, he turned crimson and stammered out such nonsense that the ladies noticed it, and made him the target for their wit. None of them was bolder or more confident in their attacks on him than the Princess, so that at last he

looked upon the woman who concealed so much passion in her breast and could yet command herself so thoroughly as a kind of miracle, and said to himself: "The world is right; woman is a riddle!"

The Princess remained there some weeks longer, and always maintained the same polite and friendly, but cool and sometimes ironical, demeanor toward him. But he easily endured being looked upon as her unfortunate adorer by the world, for at least every other day a small perfumed note, with her crest and signed "Léonie," summoned him to the pavilion, and there he enjoyed the full, delightful possession of the beautiful woman. It, however, struck him as strange that she would never let him see her face. Her head was always covered with a thick black veil, through which he could see her eyes, which sparkled with love, glistening; he passed his fingers through her hair, he saw her well-known dresses, and once he succeeded in getting possession of one of her pocket-handkerchiefs, on which the name Léonie and the princely coronet were magnificently embroidered.

When she returned to Vienna for the winter a note from her invited him to follow her there, and as he had indefinite leave of absence from his regiment, he could obey the commands of his divinity. As soon as he arrived there he received another note, which forbade him to go to her house, but promised him a speedy meeting in his rooms, and so the young officer had the furniture elegantly renovated, and looked forward to a visit from the beautiful woman with all a lover's impatience.

At last she came, wrapped in a magnificent cloak of green velvet, trimmed with ermine, but still

thickly veiled, and before she came in she made it a condition that the room in which he received her should be quite dark, and after he had put out all the lights she threw off her fur, and her coldness gave way to the most impetuous tenderness.

"What is the reason that you will never allow me to see your dear, beautiful face?" the officer asked.

"It is a whim of mine, and I suppose I have the right to indulge in whims," she said hastily.

"But I so long once more to see your splendid figure and your lovely face in full daylight," the Count continued.

"Very well, then, you shall meet me at the opera this evening."

She left him at six o'clock, after staying barely an hour with him, and as soon as her carriage had driven off he dressed and went to the opera. During the overture he saw the Princess enter her box looking dazzlingly beautiful; she was wearing the same green velvet cloak, trimmed with ermine, that he had had in his hands a short time before, and as it fell from her shoulders it revealed a neck which was worthy of the Goddess of Love. She spoke to her husband with much animation, and smiled with her usual cold smile, though she did not give her adorer even a passing look, but in spite of this he was the happiest of mortals.

In Vienna, however, the Count was not as fortunate as he had been at Karlsbad, where he had first met her, for his beautiful lady came to see him only once a week; often she only stayed a short time with him, and once nearly six weeks passed without her seeing him at all, and she did not even make any excuse for remaining away. Just then,

however, Léonie's husband accidentally made the young officer's acquaintance at the Jockey Club, took a fancy to him, and asked him to go and see him at his house.

When he called and found the Princess alone his heart felt as if it would burst with pleasure, and, seizing her hand, he pressed it ardently to his lips.

"What are you doing, Count?" she said, drawing back. "You are behaving very strangely."

"We are alone," the young officer whispered, "so why this mask of innocence? Your cruelty is driving me mad, for it is six weeks since you came to see me last."

"I certainly think you are out of your mind," the Princess replied, with every sign of the highest indignation, and hastily left the drawing-room. Nothing else remained for the Count but to do the same thing, but his mind was in a perfect whirl, and he was quite incapable of explaining to himself the Princess's enigmatical behavior. He dined at an hotel with some friends, and when he got home he found a note in which the Princess begged him to pardon her, and promised to justify her conduct, for which purpose she would see him at eight o'clock that evening.

Scarcely, however, had he read her note, when two of his brother officers came to see him, and asked him, with well-simulated anxiety, whether he were ill. When he said that he was perfectly well, one of them continued, laughing: "Then please explain the occurrence that is in everybody's mouth to-day, in which you play such a comical part."

"I, a comical part?" the Count shouted.

"Well, is it not very comical when you call on

a lady like Princess Léonie, whom you do not know, to upbraid her for her cruelty, and most unceremoniously call her *thou*? ''

That was too much; Count F—— might pardon the Princess for pretending not to know him in society, but that she should make him a common laughing-stock nearly drove him mad. '' If I call the Princess *thou*,'' he exclaimed, '' it is because I have the right to do so, as I will prove.'' His comrades shrugged their shoulders, but he asked them to come again punctually at seven o'clock, and then he made his preparations.

At eight o'clock his divinity made her appearance, still thickly veiled, but on this occasion wearing a valuable sable cloak. As usual Count F—— took her into the dark room and locked the outer door; then he opened that which led into his bedroom, and his two friends came in, each with a candle in his hand. The lady in the sable cloak cried out in terror when Count F—— pulled off her veil, but then it was his turn to be surprised, for it was not Princess Léonie who stood before him, but her pretty lady's maid, who, now she was discovered, confessed that love had driven her to assume her mistress's part, in which she had succeeded perfectly, on account of the similarity of their figure, eyes, and hair. She had found the Count's letter in the Princess's pocket-handkerchief when they were at Karlsbad, and had answered it. She had made him happy, and had heightened the illusion which her figure gave rise to by borrowing the Princess's dresses.

Of course the Count was made great fun of, and turned his back on Vienna hastily that same evening, but the pretty lady's maid also disappeared

soon after the catastrophe, and only by those means escaped from her mistress's well-merited anger; for it turned out that that gay little individual had already played the part of her mistress more than once, and had deceived those hopeless adorers of the Princess.

Thus was solved the enigma which Princess Léonie seemed to have presented to the world.

THE CAKE

WE will call her Madame Anserre, though it was not her real name.

She was one of those Parisian comets who leave, as it were, a trail of light behind them. She wrote verses and novels; she had a poetic heart, and was ravishingly beautiful. She opened her doors to very few—only to exceptional people, those with the title of Prince.

To have the *entrée* of her house stamped one as a person of intelligence, and it was an honor much appreciated.

Her husband played the part of an obscure satellite. It is not easy to be the husband of a star. This husband had, however, an original idea, that of creating a state within a state, of possessing some value in himself, a secondary value, possibly; but still, in this way, when his wife held receptions he also held a reception on his own account. He had his special set who appreciated him, listened to him,

and bestowed more attention on him than they did on his brilliant partner.

He had devoted himself to agriculture—to agriculture in the Chamber. There are in the same way generals in the Chamber—those who are born, who live, and who die on the round leather chairs of the War Office are all of this sort, are they not?—sailors in the Chamber—viz., in the Admiralty—colonizers in the Chamber, etc., etc. So he had studied agriculture; indeed, he had studied it deeply, in its relation to the other sciences, with political economy, with the fine arts—we call everything art, even the horrible railway bridges are "works of art." At length he reached the point when it was said of him: "He is a man of ability." He was quoted in the technical reviews; his wife had succeeded in getting him appointed a member of a committee at the Ministry of Agriculture.

This modest glory was quite sufficient for him.

Under pretext of diminishing expenses he invited his friends for the same day his wife received hers, so that they mixed together, or, rather, they did not—they formed two groups. Madame, with her escort of artists, Academicians, and Ministers, occupied a kind of hall, furnished and decorated in the style of the Empire. Monsieur generally withdrew with his agriculturists into a smaller portion of the house used as a smoking-room and ironically described by Madame Anserre as the Salon of Agriculture.

The two camps were distinctly separate. Monsieur would sometimes venture into the Academy, and cordial handshakings were exchanged, but the Academy entertained infinite contempt for the Salon of Agriculture, and it was rarely that one of the

princes of science, of thought, or of anything else, mingled with the agriculturists.

These receptions occasioned little expense—a cup of tea, a cake, that was all. Monsieur, at an earlier period, had claimed two cakes, one for the Academy and one for the agriculturists, but, Madame having rightly suggested that this way of acting seemed to indicate two camps, two receptions, two parties, Monsieur did not press the matter, so that they had only one cake, of which Madame Anserre did the honors at the Academy, and which then passed into the Salon of Agriculture.

Now, this cake was soon, for the Academy, a subject of observation well calculated to arouse curiosity. Madame Anserre never cut it herself. That function always fell to the lot of one or other of the illustrious guests. The particular duty, which was supposed to carry with it honorable distinction, was performed by each person for a pretty long period, in one case for three months, scarcely ever for more; and it was noticed that the privilege of "cutting the cake" carried with it a number of other marks of superiority—a sort of royalty, or, rather, very accentuated vice-royalty.

The reigning cutter spoke in a haughty tone, with an air of marked command; and all the favors of the mistress of the house were for him alone.

These happy individuals were in moments of intimacy described in hushed tones behind doors as the "favorites of the cake," and every change of favorite introduced into the Academy a sort of revolution. The knife was a scepter, the pastry an emblem; the chosen ones were congratulated. The agriculturists never cut the cake. Monsieur himself was always excluded, although he ate his share.

The cake was cut in succession by poets, by painters, and by novelists. A great musician had the privilege of measuring the portions of the cake for some time; an ambassador succeeded him. Sometimes a man less well known, but elegant and sought after, one of those who are called, according to the different epochs, " true gentleman," or " perfect knight," or " dandy," or something else, seated himself, in his turn, before the symbolic cake. Each of them, during his ephemeral reign, exhibited greater consideration toward the husband; then, when the hour of his fall had arrived, he passed on the knife toward the other, and mingled once more with the crowd of followers and admirers of the " beautiful Madame Anserre."

This state of things lasted a long time, but comets do not always shine with the same brilliance. Everything gets worn out in society. One would have said that gradually the eagerness of the cutters grew feebler; they seemed to hesitate at times when the tray was held out to them; this office, once so much coveted, became less and less desired. It was retained for a shorter time; they appeared to be less proud of it.

Madame Anserre was prodigal of smiles and civilities. Alas! no one was found any longer to cut it voluntarily. The newcomers seemed to decline the honor. The " old favorites " reappeared one by one like dethroned princes who have been replaced in power for a brief spell. Then, the chosen ones became few, very few. For a month (oh, wonder!) M. Anserre cut the cake; then he looked as if he were getting tired of it; and one evening Madame Anserre, the beautiful Madame Anserre, was seen cutting it herself. But this ap-

peared to be very wearisome to her, and next day she urged one of her guests so strongly to do it that he did not dare to refuse.

The symbol was too well known, however; the guests stared at one another with scared, anxious faces. To cut the cake was nothing, but the privileges to which this favor had always given a claim now frightened people; therefore, the moment the dish made its appearance the Academicians rushed pell-mell into the Salon of Agriculture, as if to shelter themselves behind the husband, who was perpetually smiling. And when Madame Anserre, in a state of anxiety, presented herself at the door with a cake in one hand and the knife in the other, they all seemed to form a circle around her husband as if to appeal to him for protection.

Some years passed. Nobody cut the cake now; but, yielding to an inveterate habit, the lady who had always been gallantly called " the beautiful Madame Anserre " looked out each evening for some devotee to take the knife, and each time the same movement took place around her, a general flight, skilfully arranged, and full of combined and clever maneuvers to avoid the offer that was rising to her lips.

But, one evening, a young man presented himself at her reception—an innocent, unsophisticated youth. He knew nothing about the mystery of the cake; accordingly, when it appeared, and when all the rest ran away, when Madame Anserre took from the man-servant's hands the dish and the pastry, he remained quietly by her side.

She thought that, perhaps, he knew about the matter; she smiled and, in a tone which showed some emotion, said:

"Will you be kind enough, dear Monsieur, to cut this cake?"

He displayed the utmost readiness, and took off his gloves, flattered at such an honor being conferred on him.

"Oh, to be sure, Madame, with the greatest pleasure."

Some distance away in the doorway leading to the Salon of Agriculturists were faces full of amazement looking on. Then, when the spectators saw the newcomer cutting without any hesitation, they quickly came forward.

An old poet jocosely slapped the neophyte on the shoulder.

"Bravo, young man!" he whispered in his ear.

The others gazed at him with curiosity. Even the husband appeared to be surprised. As for the young man, he was astonished at the consideration which they suddenly seemed to show toward him; above all, he failed to comprehend the marked attentions, the manifest favor, and the species of mute gratitude which the mistress of the house bestowed on him.

It appears, however, that he eventually found out.

At what moment, in what place, was the revelation made to him? Nobody could tell; but when he again presented himself at the reception he had a preoccupied air, almost a shamefaced look, and he cast around him a glance of uneasiness.

The bell rang for tea. The man-servant appeared. Madame Anserre, with a smile, seized the dish, casting a look about her for her young friend; but he had fled so precipitately that no trace of him could be seen any longer. Then she went look-

ing everywhere for him, and ere long she discovered him in the Salon of the Agriculturists. With his arm locked in that of the husband, he was earnestly consulting that gentleman as to the best method of destroying phylloxera.

"My dear Monsieur," she said to him, "will you be so kind as to cut this cake for me?"

He reddened to the roots of his hair, and, hanging down his head, stammered out some excuses. Thereupon M. Anserre took pity on him, and, turning toward his wife, said:

"My dear, you might have the goodness not to disturb us. We are talking about agriculture. Let Baptiste cut your cake."

And since that day nobody has ever cut Madame Anserre's cake.

THE AWAKENING

SHE had not left the Val de Ciré, where her husband owned two cotton-mills, in all the three years she had been married. She had no children, but, although she led a quiet life, was quite happy in her home among the trees, called the château by the mill operatives.

Monsieur Vasseur, though considerably older than she was, was very kind to her. She loved him, and no untrue thought had ever entered her mind.

Her mother came and spent every summer at Ciré, and then returned to Paris for the winter, as soon as the leaves began to fall.

Jeanne had a slight cough every autumn, for the narrow valley through which the river wound became foggy for five months. First of all, there would be slight mists over the meadows, making all the low ground look like a large pond, above which the roofs of the houses appeared.

This white vapor, which rose like a tide, soon enveloped everything, and turned the valley into a land of phantoms, where men moved about like ghosts, unable to recognize each other ten yards off, and the trees, dripping with moisture, rose up through the mist.

But the people who passed along the neighboring hills and looked down upon the deep, white depression of the valley saw the two huge chimneys of Monsieur Vasseur's factories rising above the mist below. Day and night they vomited forth two long streams of black smoke, and that alone indicated that people were living in that hollow, which looked as if it were filled with a cloud of cotton.

That year, when October came, the medical men advised the young woman to go and spend the winter in Paris with her mother, as the air of the valley was dangerous for her weak chest, and she went. For a month or so she thought continually of the home which she had left, to which she was attached, and whose well-known furniture and quiet ways she loved so much, but by degrees she became accustomed to her new life, and enjoyed entertainments, dinner and evening parties, and balls.

Till then she had retained her girlish manners; she had been undecided and rather inert; she walked languidly, and had a tired smile, but now she became animated and merry, and was always ready for amusement. Men paid her marked attention,

and she was amused at their talk and made fun of their gallantries, as she felt sure that she could resist them, for she was rather disgusted with what is called love, from what she had learned of it in marriage.

The idea of giving up her body to the coarse caresses of such bearded creatures made her laugh with pity, and shudder a little with ignorance.

She asked herself how women could consent to those degrading contacts with strangers, as they were already obliged to endure them with their legitimate husbands. She would have loved her husband much more if they had lived together like two friends and had restricted themselves to chaste kisses, which are the caresses of the soul.

But she was much amused by their compliments, by the desire which showed itself in their eyes, and which she did not reciprocate, by their declarations of love, which they whispered into her ear as they were returning to the drawing-room after some grand dinner, by their words, which were murmured so low that she almost had to guess them, and which left her blood quite cool and her heart untouched, while they gratified her unconscious coquetry, while they kindled a flame of pleasure within her that brought a smile to her lips, made her eyes glow, and her woman's heart, to which homage was due, quiver with delight.

She was fond of those *tête-à-têtes* when it was getting dusk, when a man grows persistent, stammers, trembles, and falls on his knees. It was a delicious and new pleasure to her to know that they felt that passion which left her quite unmoved, to say no, by a shake of the head, and with her lips; to withdraw her hands, to get up and calmly ring

for lights, and to see the man who had been trembling at her feet get up, confused and furious, when he heard the footman coming.

She often gave a hard laugh, which froze the most burning words, and said sharp things, which fell like a jet of icy water on the most ardent protestations, while the intonations of her voice were enough to make any man who really loved her kill himself. There were two especially who made obstinate love to her, although they did not at all resemble one another.

One of them, Paul Péronel, was a tall man of the world, gallant and enterprising, a man who was accustomed to successful love affairs, and who knew how to wait and when to improve his opportunity.

The other, Monsieur d'Avancelle, trembled when he approached her, scarcely ventured to express his love, but followed her like a shadow and gave utterance to his hopeless desire by distracted looks and the assiduity of his attentions, while she made him a kind of slave who followed her steps, and whom she treated as if he had been her servant.

She would have been much amused if anybody had told her that she would love him, and yet she did love him after a singular fashion. As she saw him continually she had grown accustomed to his voice, to his gestures, and to his manner, as one grows accustomed to those whom one meets continually. His face frequently haunted her dreams, and she saw him as he really was—gentle, delicate in all his actions, humble, but passionately in love—and she awoke full of those dreams, fancying that she still heard him and felt him near her, until one night (most likely she was feverish) she saw herself alone with him in a small wood, where they were both sit-

ting on the grass. He was saying tender things to her, while he pressed and kissed her hands.

She could feel the warmth of his skin and of his breath, and she was stroking his hair in a very natural manner.

We are quite different in our dreams to what we are in real life. She felt full of love for him, full of calm and deep love, and was happy in stroking his forehead and in having him near her. Gradually he put his arms round her, kissed her eyes and her cheeks without her attempting to get away from him, and their lips met. . . .

When she saw him again, though he was unconscious of the agitation that he had caused her, she felt that she was blushing, and while he was telling her of his love she was continually recalling to mind their dream, without being able to get rid of the recollection.

She loved him, loved him with refined tenderness, which arose chiefly from the remembrance of her dream, although she dreaded its realization.

At last he perceived her embarrassment, and then she told him everything, even to the dread of his kisses, and she made him swear that he would respect her, and he did so. They spent long hours of ideal love together, during which their souls were in harmony.

Sometimes their lips met, but she felt that she could not resist the infatuation much longer, and as she did not wish to dishonor herself, she wrote and told her husband that she wanted to come to him, and to return to her tranquil, solitary life. He wrote her a very kind letter in reply, and strongly advised her not to return in the middle of the winter and expose herself to a sudden change of cli-

mate and to the icy mists of the valley. She was astonished and angry with that confiding man, who did not guess, who did not understand, the struggles of her heart.

February was a warm, bright month, and, although she now avoided being alone with Monsieur Avancelle, she sometimes accepted his invitation to drive round the lake in the Bois de Boulogne with him in the twilight.

On one of these evenings it was so warm that it seemed as if the sap in every tree and plant were rising. Their cab was going at a walk; it was growing dusk, and they were sitting close together, holding each other's hands, and she said to herself:

"It is all over, I am lost!" for she felt the awakening of her desires, the imperious need of that supreme emotion which she had experienced in her dream. Every moment their lips sought each other, clung together and separated, only to meet again immediately.

He did not venture to go into the house with her, but left her at the door, more in love with him than ever, and half fainting.

Monsieur Paul Péronel was waiting for her in the little drawing-room without a light, and when he shook hands with her he felt how feverish she was. He began to talk in a low, tender voice, soothing her weary mind with the charm of tender words.

She listened to him without replying, for she was thinking of the other; she thought she was listening to the other, and thought she felt him leaning against her, in a kind of hallucination. She saw only Avancelle, and did not remember that any other man existed on earth, and when her ears trembled at those three syllables: "I love you," it was

he, the other man, who uttered them, who kissed her hands, who strained her to his breast, as he had done shortly before in the cab. It was he who pressed victorious kisses on her lips, it was his lips, it was he whom she held in her arms and embraced, whom she was calling to, with all the longings of her heart, with all the overwrought emotion of her being.

The next day she returned to Val de Ciré, and her husband, who had not expected her for some time, blamed her for her whim.

"I could not live away from you any longer," she said.

He found her altered in character and sadder than formerly, but when he said to her:

"What is the matter with you? You seem unhappy. What do you want?" she replied:

"Nothing. Happiness exists only in our dreams in this world."

Avancelle came to see her the next summer, and she received him without any emotion, and without regret, for she suddenly perceived that she had never loved him, except in a dream, from which Paul Péronel had brutally roused her.

But the young man, who still adored her, thought as he returned to Paris:

"Women are really very strange, complicated, and inexplicable beings."

AN ADVENTURE IN PARIS

IS there any feeling stronger than curiosity in a woman? Imagine seeing, knowing, touching what one has dreamed about! What would a woman not do for that? When once her eager curiosity is roused, she will be guilty of any folly, commit any imprudence, venture upon anything, and recoil from nothing. I am speaking of women who are really women, who are endowed with that three-layered disposition which appears to be reasonable and cold on the surface, but whose three secret compartments are filled: the first with female restlessness, which is always in a state of flutter; the next with sly tricks which are colored in imitation of good faith with those sophistical and formidable tricks of apparently devout women, and the last with all those charming, improper acts, with

that delightful deceit, exquisite perfidy, and all those wayward qualities which drive lovers who are stupidly credulous to suicide, but which delight others.

The woman whose adventure I am about to relate was a little person from the provinces, who had been insipidly chaste till then. Her life, which was apparently so calm, was spent at home, with a busy husband and two children, whom she brought up like an irreproachable woman. But her heart beat with unsatisfied curiosity and some unknown longing. She was continually thinking of Paris, and read the fashionable papers eagerly. The accounts of parties, of the dresses and various entertainments, excited her longing; but, above all, she was strangely agitated by those paragraphs which were full of double meaning, by that veil which was half raised by clever phrases, and which gave her a glimpse of culpable and ravishing delights, and from her country home she saw Paris in the apotheosis of magnificent and corrupt luxury.

And during the long nights, when she dreamed, lulled by the regular snoring of her husband, who was sleeping on his back by her side, with a silk handkerchief tied round his head, she saw in her sleep those well-known men whose names appeared on the first page of the newspapers as great stars in a dark sky. She pictured to herself their life of continual excitement, of constant debauches, of orgies such as were indulged in in ancient Rome, which were horribly voluptuous, with refinements of sensuality which were so complicated that she could not even picture them to herself.

The boulevards seemed to her to be a kind of abyss of human passions, and there could be no doubt that the houses there concealed mysteries of

prodigious love. But she felt that she was growing old, and this without having known life, except in those regular, horribly monotonous, everyday occupations which constitute the happiness of the home. She was still pretty, for she was well preserved in her tranquil existence, like some winter fruit in a closed cupboard; but she was agitated and devoured by her secret ardor. She used to ask herself whether she should die without having experienced any of those damning, intoxicating joys, without having plunged once, just once, into that flood of Parisian voluptuousness.

By dint of much perseverance she paved the way for a journey to Paris, found a pretext, got some relations to invite her, and as her husband could not go with her, she went alone, and as soon as she arrived she invented a reason for remaining for two days, or, rather, for two nights, if necessary, as she told him that she had met some friends who lived a little way out of town.

And then she set out on a voyage of discovery. She went up and down the boulevards, without seeing anything except roving and numbered vice. She looked into the large cafés, and read the "agony column" of the *Figaro,* which every morning seemed to her like a tocsin, a summons to love. But nothing put her on the track of those orgies of actors and actresses; nothing revealed to her those temples of debauchery which she imagined opened at some magic word, like the cave in the *Arabian Nights,* or those catacombs in Rome where the mysteries of a persecuted religion were secretly celebrated.

Her relations, who were quite middle-class people, could not introduce her to any of those well-known men with whose names her head was full,

and in despair she was thinking of returning when chance came to her aid. One day, as she was going along the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, she stopped to look into a shop full of that colored Japanese bric-à-brac which strikes the eye on account of its color. She was looking at the little ivory clowns, the tall vases of flaming enamel, and the curious bronzes, when she heard the shopkeeper dilating, with many bows, on the value of an enormous, pot-bellied, comical figure, which was quite unique, he said, to a little, bald-headed, gray-bearded man.

Every moment the shopkeeper repeated his customer's name, which was a celebrated one, in a voice like a trumpet. The other customers, young women and well-dressed gentlemen, gave a swift and furtive, but respectful, glance at the celebrated writer, who was looking admiringly at the china figure. They were both equally ugly, as ugly as two brothers who had sprung from the same mother.

"I will let you have it for a thousand francs, Monsieur Varin, and that is exactly what it cost me. I should ask anybody else fifteen hundred, but I think a great deal of literary and artistic customers, and have special prices for them. They all come to me, Monsieur Varin. Yesterday Monsieur Busnach bought a large, antique goblet of me, and the other day I sold two candelabra like this (is it not handsome?) to Monsieur Alexander Dumas. If Monsieur Zola were to see that Japanese figure he would buy it immediately, Monsieur Varin."

The author hesitated in perplexity, as he wanted to have the figure, but the price was above him, and he thought no more about her looking at him than if he had been alone in the desert. She came in trembling, with her eyes fixed boldly upon him, and

she did not even ask herself whether he were good-looking, elegant, or young. It was Jean Varin himself, Jean Varin. After a long struggle and painful hesitation, he put the figure down on the table. "No, it is too dear," he said. The shopkeeper's eloquence redoubled. "Oh! Monsieur Varin, too dear? It is worth two thousand francs, if it is worth a sou." But the man of letters replied sadly, still looking at the figure with the enameled eyes: "I do not say it is not, but it is too dear for me." And thereupon, seized by a kind of mad audacity, she came forward and said: "What will you charge me for the figure?" The shopkeeper, in surprise, replied: "Fifteen hundred francs, Madame." "I will take it."

The writer, who had not even noticed her till that moment, turned round suddenly: he looked at her from head to foot, with half-closed eyes, observantly, and then he took in the details, as a connoisseur. She was charming, suddenly animated by that flame which had hitherto been dormant in her. And then, a woman who gives fifteen hundred francs for a piece of bric-à-brac is not to be met with every day.

She appeared overcome by a feeling of delightful delicacy, and, turning to him, she said in a trembling voice: "Excuse me, Monsieur; no doubt I have been rather hasty, as, perhaps, you had not finally made up your mind." He, however, only bowed, and said: "Indeed, I had, Madame." And she, filled with emotion, continued: "Well, Monsieur, if either to-day, or at any other time, you change your mind, you can have this Japanese figure. I only bought it because you seemed to like it."

He was visibly flattered, and smiled: "I should

much like to find out how you know who I am?" he said. Then she told him how she admired him, and became quite eloquent as she quoted his works, and while they were talking he rested his arms on a table and fixed his bright eyes upon her, trying to make out who and what she really was. But the shopkeeper, who was pleased to have that living puff of his goods, called out, from the other end of the shop: "Just look at this, Monsieur Varin; is it not beautiful?"

And then every one looked round, and she almost trembled with pleasure at being seen talking so intimately with such a well-known man.

At last, however, intoxicated, as it were, by her feelings, she grew bold, as a general does who is going to give the order for an assault. "Monsieur," she said, "will you do me a great, a very great pleasure? Allow me to offer you this funny Japanese figure as a keepsake from a woman who admires you passionately, and whom you have seen for ten minutes."

Of course he refused and she persisted, but still he resisted her offer, at which he was much amused, and at which he laughed heartily; but that only made her more obstinate, and she said: "Very well, then, I shall take it to your house immediately; where do you live?"

He refused to give her his address, but she got it from the shopkeeper, and when she had paid for her purchase she ran out to take a cab. The writer went after her, as he did not wish to accept a present for which he could not possibly account. He reached her just as she was jumping into the vehicle, and, getting in after her, he almost fell over her, and then tumbled on to the bottom of the cab as

it started. He picked himself up, however, and sat down by her side, feeling very much annoyed.

It was useless for him to insist and to beg her; she showed herself obstinate, and when they got to the door, she stated her conditions: "I will undertake not to leave this with you," she said, "if you will promise to do all I want to-day." And the whole affair seemed so funny to him that he agreed. "What do you generally do at this time?" she asked him; and after hesitating for a few moments, he replied: "I generally go for a walk." "Very well, then; we will go to the Bois de Boulogne!" she said, in a resolute voice, and they started.

He was obliged to tell her the names of all the well-known women, pure or impure, with every detail about them; their life, their habits, their private affairs, and their vices; and when it was getting dusk, she said to him: "What do you do every day at this time?" "I take some absinthe," he replied, with a laugh. "Very well, then, Monsieur," she went on, seriously; "let us go and have some absinthe."

They went into a large café on the boulevard, which he frequented, and where he met some of his colleagues, whom he introduced to her. She was half mad with pleasure, and kept saying to herself: "At last! At last!" But time went on, and she observed that she supposed it must be about his dinner-time, and suggested that they should go and dine. When they left Bignon's, after dinner, she wanted to know what he did in the evening, and, looking at her fixedly, he replied: "That depends; sometimes I go to the theater." "Very well, then, Monsieur; let us go to the theater."

They went to the Vaudeville with an order,

thanks to him, and, to her great pride, the whole house saw her sitting by his side, in the first balcony boxes.

When the play was over he gallantly kissed her hand, and said: "It only remains for me to thank you for this delightful day. . . ." But she interrupted him: "What do you do at this time every night?" "Why . . . why . . . I go home." She began to laugh, a little, tremulous laugh. "Very well, Monsieur . . . let us go to your rooms."

They did not say anything more. She shivered occasionally, from head to foot, feeling inclined to stay and inclined to run away, but with a fixed determination, after all, to see it out to the end. She was so excited that she had to hold on to the railing as she went upstairs, and he came up behind her, with a wax match in his hand.

As soon as they were in the room she undressed herself quickly and retired without saying a word, and then she waited for him, cowering against the wall. But she was as simple as it was possible for a provincial lawyer's wife to be, and he was more exacting than a pasha with three tails, and so they did not at all understand each other. At last, however, he went to sleep, and the night passed, and the silence was only disturbed by the tick-tack of the clock, and she, lying motionless, thought of her conjugal nights; and by the light of the Chinese lantern she looked, nearly heartbroken, at the little fat man lying on his back, whose round stomach raised up the bedclothes like a balloon filled with gas. He snored with the noise of a wheezy organ pipe, with prolonged snorts and comic chokings. His few hairs profited by his sleep to stand up in

a very strange way, as if they were tired of having been fastened for so long to that pate, whose bareness they were trying to cover, and a small stream of saliva was running out of one corner of his half-open mouth.

At last the daylight appeared through the drawn blinds; so she got up and dressed herself without making any noise, and she had already half opened the door when she made the lock creak, and he woke up and rubbed his eyes. It was some moments before he quite came to himself, and then, when he remembered all that had happened, he said: "What! Are you going already?" She remained standing, in some confusion, and then she said, in a hesitating voice: "Yes, of course; it is morning. . . ."

Then he sat up, and said: "Look here, I have something to ask you, in my turn." And as she did not reply, he went on: "You have surprised me most confoundedly since yesterday. Be open, and tell me why you did it all, for upon my word I cannot understand it in the least." She went close up to him, blushing as if she had been a virgin, and said: "I wanted to know . . . what . . . what vice . . . really was . . . and . . . well . . . well, it is not at all funny."

And she ran out of the room and downstairs into the street.

A number of sweepers were busy in the streets, brushing the pavements, the roadway, and sweeping everything on one side. With the same regular motion, the motion of mowers in a meadow, they pushed the mud in front of them in a semicircle, and she met them in every street, like dancing puppets, walking automatically with their swaying motion. And it seemed to her as if something had been swept

out of her; as if her overexcited dreams had been pushed into the gutter or into the drain, and so she went home, out of breath and very cold, and all that she could remember was the sensation of the motion of those brooms sweeping the streets of Paris in the early morning.

As soon as she got into her room she threw herself upon her bed, and cried.

THE BED

ONE hot afternoon last summer the auctioneer was knocking down the various articles in a listless manner in the large auction-rooms, the occupants of which seemed half asleep. In a back room, on the first floor, two or three lots of old silk ecclesiastical vestments were lying in a corner.

There were copes for solemn occasions, and graceful chasubles on which embroidered flowers surrounded symbolic letters on a ground which had become cream-colored, although it had originally been white. Some second-hand dealers were there, two or three men with dirty beards, and a large woman with a big stomach, one of those women who deal in second-hand finery, and who also manage illicit love affairs, who are brokers in old and young human flesh, just as much as they are in new and old clothes.

Presently a beautiful Louis XV chasuble was put up for sale. It was as pretty as the dress of a marchioness of that period and had retained all its colors. It was embroidered with lilies of the valley round the cross, and long blue iris, which came up to the foot of the sacred emblem, and wreaths of roses in the corners. When I had bought it I noticed that there was a faint fragrance about it, as if it were permeated with the odor of incense, or, rather, as if it were still pervaded by those delicate, sweet scents of bygone years which seemed to be only the memory of perfumes, the soul of evaporated essences.

When I got it home I wished to have a small chair of the same period covered with it; and as I was handling it in order to take the necessary measures, I felt some paper beneath my fingers, and on cutting the lining, some letters fell at my feet. They were yellow with age, and the faint ink was the color of rust, and outside the sheet, which was folded in the fashion of years long past, it was addressed in a delicate hand:

"*To Monsieur l'Abbé d'Argence.*"

The first three lines merely assigned places of meeting, but here is the third:

"My Friend: I am very unwell, ill in fact, and I cannot leave my bed. The rain is beating against my windows, and I lie dreaming comfortably and warmly under my eider-down coverlet. I have a book of which I am very fond, and which seems as if it really applied to me. Shall I tell you what it is? No, for you would only scold me. Then, when I have read a little, I begin to think, and will tell you what about.

"Having been in bed for three days, I think about my bed, and even in my sleep I meditate on it still, and I have

come to the conclusion that the bed constitutes our whole life; for we were born in it, we live in it, and we shall die in it. If, therefore, I had Monsieur de Crébillon's pen, I should write the history of a bed, and what exciting and terrible as well as delightful, moving occurrences would not such a book contain! What lessons and what subjects for moralizing could one not draw from it, for every one?

"You know my bed, my friend, but you will never guess how many things I have discovered in it within the last three days, and how much more I love it in consequence. It seems to me to be inhabited, haunted, if I may say so, by a number of people I never thought of, who, nevertheless, have left something of themselves in that couch.

"Ah! I cannot understand people who buy new beds, beds to which no memories or cares are attached. Mine, ours, which is so shabby and so spacious, must have held many existences in it, from birth to the grave. Think of that, my friend; think of it all; review all those lives, a great part of which was spent between these four posts, surrounded by these hangings embroidered by human figures, which have seen so many things. What have they seen during the three centuries since they were first put up?

"Here is a young woman lying in this bed.

"From time to time she sighs, and then she groans and cries out; her mother is with her, and presently a little creature that makes a noise like a cat mewing, and which is all shriveled and wrinkled, comes from her. It is a male child to which she has given birth, and the young mother feels happy in spite of her pain; she is nearly suffocated with joy at that first cry, and stretches out her arms, and those around her shed tears of pleasure; for that little morsel of humanity which has come from her means the continuation of the family, the perpetuation of the blood, of the heart, and of the soul of the old people, who are looking on, trembling with excitement.

"And then, here are two lovers, who for the first time are flesh to flesh together in that tabernacle of life. They tremble; but, transported with delight, they have the delicious sensation of being close together, and by degrees their lips meet. That divine kiss makes them one, that kiss which speaks of human delights, which continually promises them, announces them, and precedes them.

"Do you remember those lines from some old poet, which you read to me last year? I do not remember who wrote them, but it may have been Ronsard:—

"'When you and I in bed shall lie,
How tender we shall be,
Enlaced, playing a thousand tricks
Of lovers, gamesomely.'

"I should like to have that verse embroidered on the top of my bed, where Pyramus and Thisbe are continually looking at me out of their tapestry eyes.

"And think of death, my friend, of all those who have breathed out their last sigh to God in this bed. For it is also the tomb of hopes ended, the door which closes everything, after having been the one which lets in the world. What cries, what anguish, what sufferings, what groans, how many arms stretched out toward the past; what appeals to happiness that has vanished for ever, what convulsions, what death-rattles, what gaping lips and distorted eyes, have there not been in this bed, from which I am writing to you, during the three centuries that it has sheltered human beings!

"The bed, you must remember, is the symbol of life; I have discovered this within the last three days. There is nothing good except the bed, and are not some of our best moments spent in sleep?

"But then, again, we suffer in bed! It is the refuge of those who are ill and suffering; a place of repose and comfort for worn-out bodies, and, in a word, the bed is part and parcel of humanity.

"Many other thoughts have struck me, but I have no time to note them down for you, and then, should I remember them all? Besides that, I am so tired that I mean to retire to my pillows, stretch myself out at full length, and sleep a little. But be sure and come to see me at three o'clock to-morrow; perhaps I may be better, and able to prove it to you.

"Good-by, my friend; here are my hands for you to kiss, and I also offer you my lips."

THE RIVAL PINS

AH! my dear fellow, what jades women are!"

"What makes you say that?"

"Because they have played me an abominable trick."

"You?"

"Yes, me."

"Women, or a woman?"

"Two women."

"Two women at once?"

"Yes."

"What was the trick?"

The two young men were sitting outside a café on the boulevards drinking liqueurs mixed with water, those beverages which look like infusions of all the colors in a box of paints. They were nearly the same age; twenty-five to thirty. One was dark and the other fair, and they had the same semi-elegant look of stockbrokers, of men who go to the Stock Exchange and into drawing-rooms, who are

to be seen everywhere, who live everywhere, and love everywhere. The dark one continued:

"I have told you about that little woman, a tradesman's wife, whom I met on the beach at Dieppe?"

"Yes."

"My dear fellow, you know what it is; there is some one in Paris whom I love dearly, an old friend, a good friend, and it has grown into a habit, in fact, and I value it very much."

"Your habit."

"Yes, my habit, and hers also. She is married to an excellent man, whom I also value very much, a very cordial fellow. A capital companion! I may say, I think that my life is bound up with that house."

"Well?"

"Well! they could not manage to leave Paris, and I found myself a widower at Dieppe."

"Why did you go to Dieppe?"

"For change of air. One cannot remain on the boulevards the whole time."

"And then?"

"Then I met the little woman I mentioned to you on the beach there."

"The wife of that head of his public office?"

"Yes, she was dreadfully dull; her husband only came every Sunday, and he is horrible! I understand her perfectly, and we laughed and danced together."

"And the rest?"

"Yes, but that came later. However, we met, we liked each other, I told her I liked her, and she made me repeat it, so that she might understand it better, and she put no obstacles in my way."

"Did you love her?"

"Yes, a little; she is very nice."

"And what about the other?"

"The other was in Paris! Well, for six weeks it was very pleasant, and we returned here on the best of terms. Do you know how to break with a woman, when that woman has not wronged you in any way?"

"Yes, perfectly well."

"How do you manage it?"

"I give her up."

"How do you do it?"

"I do not see her any longer."

"But supposing she comes to you?"

"I am . . . not at home."

"And if she comes again?"

"I say I am not well."

"If she looks after you?"

"I play her some dirty trick."

"And if she puts up with it?"

"I write to her husband anonymous letters, so that he may look after her on the days that I expect her."

"That is serious! I cannot resist, and do not know how to bring about a rupture, and so I have a collection of mistresses. There are some whom I do not see more than once a year, others every ten months, others on those days when they want to dine at a restaurant. Those whom I have put at regular intervals do not worry me, but I often have great difficulty with the fresh ones, so as to keep them at proper intervals."

"And then. . . ."

"Then this little woman was all fire and flame, without any fault of mine, as I told you! As her

husband spends the whole day at his office she began to come to me unexpectedly, and twice she nearly met my regular one on the stairs."

"The devil!"

"Yes; so I gave each of them her days, regular days, to avoid confusion, Saturday and Monday for the old one, Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday for the new one."

"Why did you show her the preference?"

"Ah! My dear friend, she is younger."

"So that only gave you two days to yourself in a week."

"That is enough for one."

"Allow me to compliment you on that."

"Well, just fancy that the most ridiculous and most annoying thing in the world happened to me. For four months everything had been going on perfectly; I felt perfectly safe, and I was really very happy, when suddenly, last Monday, the crash came.

"I was expecting my regular one at the usual time, a quarter-past one, and was smoking a good cigar and dreaming, very well satisfied with myself, when I suddenly saw that it was past the time, at which I was much surprised, for she is very punctual, but I thought that something might have accidentally delayed her. However, half an hour passed, then an hour, an hour and a half, and then I knew that something must have detained her; a sick headache, perhaps, or some annoying visitor. That sort of waiting is very vexatious, that . . . useless waiting . . . very annoying and enervating. At last, I made up my mind to go out, and, not knowing what to do, I went to her and found her reading a novel.

" ' Well,' I said to her. And she replied quite calmly:

" ' My dear, I could not come, I was hindered.'

" ' How? '

" ' By . . . something else.'

" ' What was it? '

" ' A very annoying visit.'

" I saw that she would not tell me the true reason, and as she was very calm, I did not trouble myself any more about it, and hoped to make up for lost time with the other, the next day, and on the Tuesday I was very . . . very excited and amorous in expectation of the public official's little wife, and I was surprised that she had not come before the appointed time, and I looked at the clock every moment, and watched the hands impatiently, but the quarter past, then the half hour, then two o'clock. I could not sit still any longer, and walked up and down very soon in great strides, putting my face against the window and my ears to the door, to listen whether she was not coming upstairs.

" Half-past two, three o'clock! I seized my hat and rushed to her house. She was reading a novel, my dear fellow! ' Well! ' I said anxiously, and she replied as calmly as usual: ' I was hindered, and could not come.'

" ' By what? '

" ' An annoying visit.'

" Of course, I immediately thought that they both knew everything, but she seemed so calm and quiet that I set aside my suspicions, and thought it was only some strange coincidence, as I could not believe in such dissimulation on her part, and so, after half an hour's friendly talk, which was, however, interrupted a dozen times by her little girl coming

in and out of the room, I went away, very much annoyed. Just imagine, the next day. . . ."

"The same thing happened?"

"Yes, and the next also. And that went on for three weeks without any explanation, without anything explaining that strange conduct to me, the secret of which I suspected, however."

"They knew everything?"

"I should think so, by George! But how? Ah! I had a great deal of anxiety before I found it out."

"How did you manage it at last?"

"From their letters, for on the same day they both gave me their dismissal in identical terms."

"Well?"

"This is how it was. . . . You know that women always have an array of pins about them. I know hairpins, I doubt them, and look after them, but the others are much more treacherous, those confounded little black-headed pins which look all alike to us, great fools that we are, but which they can distinguish, just as we can distinguish a horse from a dog.

"Well, it appears that one day my Minister's little wife left one of those tell-tale instruments pinned to the paper, close to my looking-glass. My usual one had immediately seen this little black speck, no bigger than a flea, and had taken it out without saying a word, and then had left one of her pins, which was also black, but of a different pattern, in the same place.

"The next day the Minister's wife wished to recover her property, and immediately recognized the substitution. Then her suspicions were aroused, and she put in two and crossed them, and my original one replied to this telegraphic signal by three

black pellets, one on the top of the other, and as soon as this method had begun, they continued to communicate with one another, without saying a word, only to spy on each other. Then it appears that the regular one, being bolder, wrapped a tiny piece of paper round the little wire point, and wrote upon it: 'C. D., Poste Restante, Boulevard Malherbes.'

"Then they wrote to each other. You understand that was not everything that passed between them. They set to work with precaution, with a thousand stratagems, with all the prudence that is necessary in such cases, but the regular one did a bold stroke, and made an appointment with the other. I do not know what they said to each other; all that I know is that I had to pay the costs of their interview. There you have it all!"

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"And you do not see them any more?"

"I beg your pardon. I see them as friends, for we have not quarreled altogether."

"And have they met again?"

"Yes, my dear fellow, they have become intimate friends."

"And has not that given you an idea?"

"No. What idea?"

"You great booby! The idea of making them put back the pins where they found them."

A HUSBAND'S CONFESSION

WHEN Captain Hector-Marie de Montenne married Mademoiselle Laurine d'Estelle, their relations and friends thought it would be an unhappy marriage.

Mademoiselle Laurine, p r e t t y, slender, fair, and bold, at twelve years of age had as much self-assurance as a woman of thirty. She was one of those little precocious Parisiennes who seem to be born with all the worldly wisdom, all the little feminine tricks, all the emancipation of ideas, with that astuteness and suppleness of mind that seems to inevitably predestinate certain individuals in whatever they do to trick and deceive others. All their actions seem premeditated, all their proceedings a matter of calculation, all their words carefully weighed; their existence is only a part they play in a drama.

She was also charming; laughed readily, so readily that she could not restrain herself when a thing seemed amusing and humorous. She would laugh right in a person's face in the most impudent manner, but she did it so gracefully that no one ever grew angry.

She was rich, very rich. A priest served as go-between in arranging her marriage with Captain de Fontenne. Brought up in a monastery in the most austere manner, this officer had taken with him into his regiment his monastic manners, very rigid principles, and absolute intolerance. He was one of those men who invariably become either saints or nihilists; men who are absolutely dominated by an ideal, whose beliefs are inflexible and their determination immovable.

He was a big, dark-haired young fellow, serious, severe, with an ingenuous mind, decided and obstinate, one of those men who pass through life without ever understanding its hidden meaning, its shadings and subtleties, who guess at nothing, suspect nothing, and will not allow any one to think differently, form a different opinion, believe or act differently from themselves.

Mademoiselle Laurine saw him, read his character at once, and accepted him as her husband.

They got along splendidly together. She was yielding, clever, and sensible, knowing how to act her part, and always ready to assist in good works, and on the occasion of festivals a constant attendant at church and at the theater, worldly and strict, with a little ironical look, a twinkle in her eye when she chatted gravely with her husband. She told him about her charitable undertakings in association with all the priests of the parish and the environs,

and she took advantage of this pious occupation to stay out of doors from morning till night.

But sometimes, in the midst of telling him about some act of charity, she would suddenly go off into an idiotic laugh, a nervous laugh that she could not restrain. The captain was surprised, perplexed, a little shocked at seeing his wife suffocating with laughter. When she quieted down a little he asked: "What is the matter with you, Laurine?" She replied: "Nothing! I just happened to remember something funny that occurred." And she told him some story or other.

Well, in the summer of 1883 Captain Hector de Fontenne took part in the grand maneuvers of the Thirty-second Army Corps.

One evening, as they were encamped on the outskirts of a town, after ten days of tenting in the open field, ten days of fatigue and privations, the captain's comrades determined to have a good dinner.

Monsieur de Fontenne refused at first to form one of the party; then, as they seemed surprised at his refusal, he consented.

His neighbor at table, Commandant de Favré, while chatting about military operations, the only thing that interested the captain, kept filling up his glass with wine. It had been a very warm day, a heavy, dry heat that made one thirsty, and the captain drank without thinking, without noticing that gradually he was becoming filled with fresh vivacity, with a certain ardent joy, a happiness full of awakened desires, of unknown appetites, of vague hopes.

At dessert he was intoxicated. He talked, laughed, became restless, noisily drunk, with the

mad drunkenness of a man who is habitually quiet and sober.

It was proposed that they should finish up the evening at the theater. He accompanied his friends. One of them recognized an actress whom he had been in love with, and they arranged to dine with the actresses of the company.

The following day the Captain awoke in a strange room, and a little, fair woman said, as she saw him open his eyes:

"Good morning, *mon gros chat!*"

He did not understand at first. Then, little by little, his memory returned, although it was a little indistinct.

Then he got up, without saying a word, dressed, and left the room, after emptying his purse out on the mantelpiece.

He was filled with shame when he stood up in his uniform, with his sword at his side, in this furnished room with its rumpled curtains, its shabby couch, and he was afraid to leave and go down the stairs, where he might meet the janitor, and, above all, he hated to go into the street where the neighbors and passers-by would see him.

The woman kept repeating: "What has happened to you? Have you lost your tongue? It was hung on wires last night, however! What a face!"

He bowed stiffly, and, having decided that he would leave the house, he returned home at a rapid pace, feeling convinced that every one could tell from his manner, his behavior, his face, where he had been.

He was filled with remorse, the tormenting remorse of an upright, scrupulous man.

He went to confession, took communion; but he was ill at ease, haunted by the remembrance of his fall and by the feeling of an indebtedness, a sacred indebtedness contracted against his wife.

He did not see her for a month, as she had gone to stay with her parents while the maneuvers lasted.

She came to him with open arms, a smile on her lips. He welcomed her with an embarrassed and guilty air, and avoided almost all conversation with her until evening.

As soon as they were alone she said:

"What is the matter with you, *mon ami?* I think you have changed very much."

"Nothing is the matter with me, my dear, absolutely nothing."

"Excuse me, I know you well, and I am sure that there is something, some anxiety, some sorrow, some annoyance, I know not what."

"Well, then, yes. I have some anxiety."

"Ah! what is it?"

"I cannot possibly tell you."

"Not tell me! Why? You make me uneasy."

"I can give you no reason. It is impossible for me to tell you."

She had sat down on a *causeuse,* and he was walking up and down the room, his hands behind his back, and avoided looking at his wife. She continued:

"Well, then, I shall have to make you confess; it is my duty, and I shall exact from you the truth, it is my right. You can no more have a secret from me than I can have one from you."

He said, as he turned his back to her and stood framed in the long window:

"My dear, there are certain things it is best

not to tell. This thing that worries me is one of them."

She rose, walked across the room, and, taking him by the arm, made him turn round facing her; then, putting her two hands on his shoulders and smiling, she looked up in a caressing manner and said:

"Come, Marie" (she called him Marie in moments of tenderness), "you cannot hide anything from me. I shall imagine that you have done something wrong."

"I have done something very wrong," he murmured.

"Oh, is it as bad as that?" she said gayly. "As bad as that? I am very much astonished at you!"

"I will not tell you any more," he replied, with annoyance; "it is useless to insist."

But she drew him down on the armchair and made him sit down, while she sat on his right knee and gave him a little light kiss, a quick, flying kiss, on the curled tip of his mustache.

"If you will not tell me anything, we shall always be bad friends," she said.

Distracted with remorse and tortured with regret, he murmured:

"If I should tell you what I had done you would never forgive me."

"On the contrary, *mon ami,* I should forgive you at once."

"No, that is not possible."

"I swear I will forgive you."

"No, my dear Laurine, you never could."

"How simple you are, *mon ami,* not to say silly! In refusing to tell me what you have done you allow me to believe all sorts of abominable

things; and I shall always be thinking of it, and be as much annoyed at your silence as at your unknown guilt. But if you were to speak to me frankly I should forget all about it by to-morrow."

"Well, then . . ."

"What?"

He reddened up to his ears, and said in a serious tone:

"I am going to confess to you as if I were confessing to a priest, Laurine."

The fleeting smile with which she sometimes listened to him now came to her lips, and she said, in a slightly mocking tone:

"I am all ears."

"You know, my dear," he resumed, "how sober I am. I never drink anything but water colored with wine, and never any liqueurs, as you know."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, then, just imagine that at the end of the grand maneuvers I forgot myself, and drank a little one evening, as I was very thirsty, very tired, very exhausted, and . . ."

"You became intoxicated? Fie, that was very bad!"

"Yes, I became intoxicated."

She had assumed a severe look.

"Come, now, quite drunk, acknowledge it; so drunk you could not walk, tell the truth!"

"Oh, no; not as bad as that. I had lost my reason, but not my equilibrium. I chattered, I laughed, I was crazy."

He was silent, and she said:

"Is that all?"

"No."

"Oh! And then?"

"And then . . . I . . . did something disgraceful."

She looked at him, uneasy, a little disturbed and also touched.

"What was it, *mon ami*?"

"We had supper—with some actresses—and I do not know how it happened, but I was untrue to you, Laurine!"

He said all this in a solemn, serious tone.

She was slightly amazed, but her eye lighted up with sudden, intense, irresistible mirth. She said:

"You—you—you——"

And a little, dry, nervous, spasmodic laugh escaped her lips, interrupting her speech.

She tried to be serious; but each time she tried to utter a word a laugh began in her throat, was choked back, and came up again like the effervescence in a bottle of champagne that is just uncorked. She put her hand to her mouth to calm herself, to keep back this untimely mirth; but her laughter ran through her fingers, shook her chest, and escaped in spite of herself. She stuttered:

"You—you—deceived me! Ha! ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!"

And she looked at him in a peculiar manner, with such a sneering expression that he was amazed, astonished.

Then, all at once, no longer restraining herself, she burst out laughing as if she had a nervous attack. She uttered little, short screams, which seemed to come from the bottom of her chest; and, placing her hands over her stomach, she gave way to long spasms of laughter, till she almost choked, just like spasms in whooping-cough. And each time she tried to check them she laughed all the more,

each word she tried to utter giving her a fresh spasm.

"My—my—my—poor friend . . . ha! ha! ha! . . . ha! ha! ha!"

He rose, leaving her seated in the chair, and, suddenly turning very pale, he said:

"Laurine, your behavior is more than unbecoming."

She stuttered in the midst of her laughter:

"How—how can I—I—I help it . . . how funny you are—ha! ha! ha! ha!"

He became livid with anger, and looked at her now with a steady gaze in which a strange thought seemed to be awakened. All at once he opened his mouth, as if to say something, but said nothing, and, turning on his heel, he went out, shutting the door behind him.

Laurine, bent double, exhausted and weak, was still laughing, with a faint laugh that revived every few moments like the embers of a fire that has almost burned out.

THE TWENTY-FIVE FRANCS OF THE MOTHER SUPERIOR

HE certainly was a comical object, Daddy Pavilly, with his long spider legs, his little body, his long arms, and his head going up in a point and surmounted by a tuft of flaming red hair.

He was a clown, a peasant clown, a humorist, born to play tricks, to make people laugh, to act parts, simple parts, as he was a peasant's son and was himself a peasant who could scarcely read. Yes! God had certainly created him to amuse others, the poor country devils who have neither theaters nor fêtes, and he amused them conscientiously. In the café people treated him to drinks in order to keep him there, and he drank intrepidly, laughing and joking, teasing everybody without making any one angry, while the people were laughing heartily around him.

He was so droll that the very girls could not resist him, ugly as he was, because he made them

laugh so. He would drag them about, joking all the while, and he tickled and squeezed them, saying such funny things that they held their sides while they pushed him away.

Toward the end of June he engaged himself as a harvest hand to farmer Le Harivau, near Rouville. For three whole weeks he amused the harvesters, male and female, by his jokes, both by day and night. During the day, when he was in the fields, he wore an old straw hat which hid his red shock of hair, and one saw him gathering up the yellow grain and tying it into bundles with his long, thin arms, and then suddenly stopping to make a funny gesture which made the laborers laugh all over the field. At night he crept in among the straw in the barn where the women slept, causing screams and exciting a disturbance. They drove him off with their wooden sabots, and he escaped on all fours, like a fantastic monkey, amid volleys of laughter from all assembled.

On the last day as the wagon full of reapers, decked with ribbons and playing bagpipes, shouting and singing with pleasure and drink, went along the white highroad, slowly drawn by six dapple-gray horses, driven by a lad in a smock, with a rosette in his cap, Pavilly, in the midst of the sprawling women, danced like a drunken satyr, and kept the little dirty-faced boys and astonished peasants standing staring at him open-mouthed on the way to the farm.

Suddenly, as they got to the gate of Le Harivau's farmyard, he gave a leap, lifting up his arms, but unfortunately, as he came down, he knocked against the side of the long wagon, fell over it upon the wheel, and rebounded into the road. His com-

panions jumped out, but he did not move; one eye was closed, while the other was open, and he was pale with fear, while his long limbs were stretched out in the dust. When they touched his right leg he began to scream, and when they tried to make him stand up, he immediately fell down.

"I think one of his legs is broken," one of the men said.

And so it really was. Harivau, therefore, had him laid on a table and sent off a man on horseback to Rouville to fetch the doctor, who came an hour later.

The farmer was very generous and said that he would pay for the man's treatment in the hospital; so the doctor carried Pavilly off in his carriage to the hospital, and had him put into a whitewashed ward, where the fracture was reduced.

As soon as he knew that it would not kill him and that he would be taken care of, coddled, cured, and fed without having anything to do except to lie on his back between the sheets, Pavilly's joy was unbounded, and he began to laugh silently and continuously, showing his decayed teeth.

Whenever one of the Sisters of Mercy came near his bed he made grimaces of satisfaction, winking, twisting his mouth awry and moving his nose, which was very long and mobile. His neighbors in the ward, ill as they were, could not help laughing, and the Mother Superior often came to his bedside to be amused for a quarter of an hour. He invented all kinds of jokes and stories for her, and as he had the making of an actor in him, he would be devout in order to please her, and spoke of religion with the serious air of a man who knows that there are times when jokes are out of place.

One day he took it into his head to sing to her. She was delighted and came to see him more frequently, and then she brought him a hymn-book, so as to utilize his voice. Then he might be seen sitting up in bed, for he was beginning to be able to move, singing the praises of the Almighty and of Mary, in a falsetto voice, while the kind, stout sister stood by him and beat time with her finger. When he could walk the Superior offered to keep him for some time longer to sing in chapel, to serve at mass, and to fulfil the duties of sacristan, and he accepted. For a whole month he might be seen in his surplice, limping along, and singing the psalms and the responses, with such impressive movements of the head that the number of the faithful increased, and people deserted the parish church to attend vespers at the hospital.

But, as everything must come to an end in this world, they were obliged to discharge him, when he was quite cured, and the Superior gave him twenty-five francs in return for his services,

As soon as Pavilly found himself in the street with all that money in his pocket he asked himself what he was going to do. Should he return to the village? Certainly not before having a drink, for he had not had one for a long time, and so he went into a café. He did not go into the town more than two or three times a year, and he had a confused and intoxicating recollection of an orgie on one of those visits in particular. He asked for a glass of the best brandy, which he swallowed at a gulp to prepare the way, and then he had another to see how it tasted.

As soon as the strong and fiery brandy had touched his palate and tongue, awakening more viv-

idly than ever the sensation of alcohol of which he was so fond, which soothes, and stings, and burns the mouth, he knew that he should drink a whole bottle of it, and he asked what it cost, so as to get it more cheaply than in single drinks. They charged him three francs, which he paid, and then he began quietly to get drunk.

However, he had some method in it, as he wished to keep sober enough for other pleasures, and so, as soon as he felt that he was on the point of seeing the chimneys bowing to him, he got up and went out with unsteady steps, with his bottle under his arm, in search of a house where he could amuse himself.

He found one, with some difficulty, after having asked a carter, who did not know of one; a postman, who directed him wrong; a baker, who began to swear and called him an old pig; and, lastly, a soldier, who was obliging enough to take him to one, and advised him to choose La Reine.

Although it was barely twelve o'clock, Pavilly went into that palace of delights, where he was received by a servant, who wanted to turn him out again. But he made her laugh by making a grimace, showed her three francs, the usual price of the special entertainment of the place, and followed her with difficulty up a dark staircase, which led to the first floor.

When he had been shown into a room he asked for La Reine, and had another drink out of the bottle while he waited. But very shortly the door opened and a girl came in. She was tall, fat, red-faced, enormous. She looked at the drunken fellow, who had fallen into a seat, with the eye of a judge of such matters, and said:

"Are you not ashamed of yourself at this time of day?"

"Ashamed of what, Princess?" he stammered.

"Why, of disturbing a lady before she has even had time to eat her dinner."

He wanted to have a joke, so he said:

"There is no such thing as time for the brave."

"And there ought to be no time for getting drunk, either, old guzzler."

At this he got angry:

"I am not a guzzler, and I am not drunk."

"Not drunk?"

"No, I am not."

"Not drunk? Why, you could not even stand up straight;" and she looked at him with the angry look of a woman who is disturbed at her dinner.

"I . . . I could dance a polka," he replied, getting up on a chair to show how steady he was; and, twirling round, he jumped on to the bed, where his thick, muddy shoes made two great marks.

"Oh! you dirty brute!" cried the girl, rushing at him, striking him such a blow in the stomach with her clinched fist that Pavilly lost his balance, fell and struck the foot of the bed, and, turning a complete somersault, tumbled on to the washstand, and, dragging the pitcher and basin with him, then rolled to the ground, roaring.

The noise was so loud and his cries so piercing that everybody in the house rushed in, the master, mistress, servant, and the staff.

The master of the house attempted to lift him up, but as soon as he stood him on his feet the peasant lost his balance again, and then began to cry out that his leg was broken, the other leg, the sound one.

It was true, so they sent for a doctor, and it happened to be the same one who had attended him at Le Harivau's.

"What! Is it you again?" he said.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"What is the matter with you?"

"Somebody has broken my other leg for me, Monsieur."

"Who did it, old fellow?"

"Why, a female."

Everybody was listening. The girls in their dressing-gowns, with their mouths still greasy from their interrupted dinner, the mistress of the house furious, the master nervous.

"This will be a bad job," the doctor said. "You know that the municipal authorities look upon you with very unfavorable eyes. We must try and hush the matter up."

"What can we do?" the master of the place asked.

"Why, the best way would be to send him back to the hospital, from which he has just been discharged, and to pay for him there."

"I would rather do that," the master of the house replied, "than have any fuss made."

So half an hour later Pavilly returned drunk and groaning to the ward which he had left an hour before. The Superior raised her arms to express her sorrow, for she liked him, and her face beamed, for she was not sorry to see him again.

"Well, my good fellow, what is the matter with you now?"

"The other leg is broken, Madame."

"So you have been riding on another straw wagon, you old joker?"

And Pavilly, sullen and confused, stammered:

"No . . . no. . . . Not this time, no . . . not this time. No . . . no. . . . It was not my fault, not my fault. . . . It was a straw mattress."

She could get no other explanation out of him, and never knew that his relapse was due to her twenty-five francs.

A NEW SENSATION

THAT little Madame d'Ormonde certainly had the devil in her, but above all a fantastic, baffling brain, through which unheard-of caprices passed, in which ideas jostled each other, like those pieces of different-colored glass in a kaleidoscope which form such strange figures when they have been shaken.

That was, very likely, the reason why she attracted, retained, and infatuated even those who had paid their debt to implacable love, who thought that they were strong and free from those passions under the influence of which men lose their heads, and that they were beyond the reach of woman's perfidious snares. Or, perhaps, it was her small, soft, delicate, white hands, which always smelled of some subtle, delicious perfume, and whose small fingers men kissed almost with devotion, al-

most with passion. Or was it her silky, golden hair; her large blue eyes, full of enigmas, of curiosity, of desire; her changeable mouth, which was quite small and infantine at one moment, when she was pouting and smiling, and as open as a rose that is unfolding in the sun, when she opened it in a laugh, and showed her pearly teeth, so that it became a target for kisses? Who will ever be able to explain that kind of magic and sorcery which some chosen women exercise over all men, that despotic authority, against which nobody would think of rebelling?

Among the numerous men who had entreated her, who were anxiously waiting for that wonderful moment when her heart would beat, when this mocking companion would grow tired and abandon herself to the pleasure of loving and of being loved, would become intoxicated with the honey of caresses, and would no longer refuse her lips to kisses, like some restive animal that fears the yoke, none had made up his mind to win the game, and to pursue this deceptive siege, as much as Xavier de Fontrailles. He marched straight for his object with a patient energy and a strength of will which no check could weaken, and with the ardent fervor of a believer who has started on a long pilgrimage, and who supports all the suffering of the long journey with the fixed and consoling idea that one day he will be able to throw himself on his knees at the shrine where he wishes to worship, and to listen to the divine words which will be a Paradise to him.

He gave way to Madame d'Ormonde's slightest whims, and did all he could never to bore her, never to hurt her feelings, but really to become a friend whom she could not do without, and of whom, in the end, a woman grows more jealous than she does

of her husband, and to whom she confesses everything, her daily worries and her dreams of the future.

She would very likely have suffered and wept and have felt a great void in her existence if they had separated for ever, if he had disappeared, and she would not have hesitated to defend him, even at the risk of compromising herself, and of passing as his mistress, if any one had attacked him in her presence, and sometimes she used to say, with a sudden, laughing sadness in her voice:

"If I were really capable of loving for five minutes consecutively I should love you."

And when they were walking in the Bois de Boulogne, while the victoria was waiting near Armenonville, during their afternoon talks, when, as he used to say, they were hanging over the abyss until they both grew giddy, and spoke of love madly and ceaselessly—returning to the subject constantly and surfeiting themselves with it—Madame d'Ormonde would occasionally produce one of her favorite theories. Yes, she certainly understood possession of the beloved object, that touch of madness which seizes you from head to foot, which fires your blood and makes you forget everything in a man's embraces, in that supreme pleasure which overwhelms you, and which rivets two beings together for ever, in heart and brain. But only at some unexpected moment, in a strange place, with a touch of something novel about it, which one would remember all one's life, something amusing and almost maddening, which one had been in search of for a long time, and which imparted a flavor of spice, as it were, into the commonplace flavor of immorality.

And Xavier de Fontrailles did all he could to

discover such a place, but failed successively in a bachelor's lodgings with silk tapestry, like a boudoir of the seventeenth century; in a villa hidden like a nest among trees and rosebushes; with a Japanese house furnished in an extraordinary fashion and very expensively, with latticed windows from which one could see the sea; in an old melancholy palace, from which one could see the Grand Canal; in rooms, in hotels, in queer quarters, in private rooms, in restaurants, and in small country houses in the recesses of woods.

Madame d'Ormonde went on her way without turning her head, but Xavier, alas! became more and more amorous, as amorous as an overgrown schoolboy who has never hitherto had any conversation with a woman, and who is amorous enough to pick up the flowers that fall from her bodice, and to be lost and unhappy as soon as he does not see her, or hear her soft, cooing voice, and see her smile.

One evening, however, he had gone with her to the fair at Saint-Cloud, and they went into three shows, deafened by the noise of the organs, the whistling of the machinery of the carrousels, and the hubbub of the crowd that came and went among the booths that were illuminated by paraffin lamps. As they were passing in front of a clairvoyant's van, Monsieur de Fontrailles stopped and said to Madame d'Ormonde:

"Would you like to have our fortunes told?"

The van was a very fine specimen of its kind, and had, no doubt, been far and wide. Placards and portraits, bordered by advertisements, hung above the shaky steps, and the small windows with their closed shutters were almost hidden by boxes of

sweet basil and mignonette, while an old, bald parrot, with her feathers all ruffled, was asleep just outside.

The fortune-teller was sitting on a chair, quietly knitting a stocking, and on their approach she got up, went up to Madame d'Ormonde, and said in an unctuous voice:

"I reveal the present, the past, and the future, and even the name of the future husband or wife, and of deceased relations, as well as my client's present and future circumstances. I have read crowned heads. The Emperor of Brazil came to me with the illustrious poet, Victor Hugo. My charge is five francs to tell your fortune from the cards or by your hand, and twenty francs for the whole fortune. Would you like the whole fortune, Madame?"

Madame d'Ormonde gave vent to a burst of ringing laughter, like a street girl who is amused; but they went in and Monsieur de Fontrailles opened the glass door which was covered with a heavy red curtain. When they got inside the young woman uttered an exclamation of surprise. The interior of the van was full of roses, arranged in the most charming manner as if for a lover's meeting. On a table covered with a damask cloth, and surrounded by piles of cushions, a supper was waiting for chance comers, and at the other end, concealed by heavy hangings, one could see a large, wide bed, one of those beds which give rise to sinister suggestions!

Xavier had shut the door again, and Madame d'Ormonde looked at him in a strange manner, with rather flushed cheeks, palpitating nostrils and a look in her eyes such as he had never seen in them be-

fore, and in a very low voice, while his heart beat violently, he whispered into her ear:

"Well, does the decoration please you this time?"

She replied by holding up her lips to him, and then filled two glasses with extra dry champagne, which was as pale as the skin of a fair woman, and said, almost as if she were already half intoxicated:

"I am decidedly worth a big stake!"

It was in this fashion that Madame d'Ormonde, for the first and last time, deceived her husband; and it was at the fair at Saint-Cloud, in a fortune-teller's van.

THE WANDERING LIFE

CHAPTER I

WEARINESS

I LEFT Paris, and France, too, on account of the Eiffel Tower.

It could not only be seen from all over, but it could be found everywhere, made of all sorts of known matter, exhibited in all the shops and show windows, an inevitable and racking nightmare.

It was not the only thing, though, that created in me an irresistible desire to be alone for a while, but everything that has been made in and over it, and even around it.

How can the newspapers have dared to speak of "new architecture," and refer to this metallic skeleton? Architecture, to-day the least understood and most forgotten of all the arts, is, perhaps, also the most esthetic, mysterious, and richest in ideas of them all.

Throughout the ages, it has had the privilege to symbolize, so to speak, each epoch; to represent, by means of a very small number of typical monu-

ments, the manner of thinking, feeling, and dreaming of a race and a civilization.

A few temples and churches, palaces and castles, contain almost all the history of art in this world, conveying to our eyes better than books, by the harmony of their lines and the charm of their ornamentation, all the beauty and grandeur of an epoch.

I should like to know what will be thought of our generation, if some riot does not soon make this high and lanky pyramid of iron ladders crumble —that ugly, gigantic skeleton, whose base seems to have been constructed to support a formidable monument of Cyclops, only to taper into a ridiculously thin profile like that of a factory chimney.

It is a problem that has been solved, people say. That is granted—although it might be said the whole discussion was of no use; but then I prefer the old idea of the ancient architects, of making again the naïve attempt of the Tower of Babel, just as those of the Campanile of Pisa did in the twelfth century.

The idea of constructing this graceful tower of eight stories of marble columns, tilting a little, as if it were about to fall sidewise, of proving to stupefied posterity that the center of gravity is nothing but a useless creation of certain engineers, and that monuments can be built without bothering about it, and still be charming and attract more surprised visitors, after seven centuries' existence, than the Eiffel Tower will in seven months—constitutes a problem (since problem there must be) which is more original than that of that gigantic kettle smeared with paint, only fit to please the eye of an Indian.

Yes, I know that a certain version would have it that the Campanile bent itself alone. Who knows? The pretty edifice keeps its secret, still discussed, and still unsolved.

But what do I care about the Eiffel Tower? It was only the lighthouse of an international Kermess, according to the consecrated expression, the remembrance of which will haunt me like a nightmare.

Far be it from my mind to criticise this great political enterprise, the World's Fair, that showed the universe, just at the right moment, the strength, vitality, activity, and inexhaustible richness of this surprising country—France.

Great pleasure and a great example, as well as much diversion, were given to the people and the middle classes. They were highly satisfied, and enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content.

But I merely decided from the very first that I was not made to appreciate such diversions.

After visiting, with a sense of profound admiration, the section devoted to the display of machinery, the fantastic discoveries of science, mechanics, physics, and modern chemistry; after satisfying myself that the Arabian dances are charming only when performed in their original setting, I remarked to myself that the fair would be an interesting place to go to once in a while, provided one could rest from the fatigue of it all at one's own home or at some friend's.

But I never had had any idea of what Paris could become, when invaded by the universe.

From the early break of day, the crowded streets resemble swollen currents. Every one is going to or coming back from the exposition, or returning

to it. In the street carriages make up a long line, that gives one the impression of an endless train. Not one is free, and there is not a coachman who will drive you to another place than the fair, or to his stable, when he is going to change horses. Not a cab at the clubs. They are all working for the strangers; not a table at the restaurants, and not a friend who dines at home or who will consent to dine at your house.

When you invite him, he accepts on condition that the dinner shall take place on the Eiffel Tower. It's more jolly! And they all, as if it were the password, invite you there every day of the week, either to have luncheon or dinner.

In this heat, dust, stench, perspiring crowd, greasy bits of flying paper, odor of delicatessen goods and spilled wine, breaths of three hundred thousand mouths, in the contact and friction with this overheated mass of flesh, this mixed sweat of all these different races, sowing their fleas, as it were, on the benches and in all the alleys—I thought it natural that one might, through curiosity, once or twice, try the far from good cooking of these aërial restaurants; but I could not help being stupefied, when I saw certain people dine every evening amid this filth and crowd, as did the members of good society of the delicate class, the *élite,* who ordinarily affect to be nauseated before the common workman who exhales the odor of physical labor.

This proves definitely that the triumph of democracy is complete.

There are no more castes, races, or aristocratic epidermis. We have now only two classes, the rich and the poor. There is no other classification to differentiate the degrees of modern society.

An aristocracy of another order is establishing itself, whose triumph was unanimous at the exposition; the aristocracy of science, or, rather, of scientific industry.

As for the arts, they are disappearing; the very instinct of art is dying out in the *élite* of the nation, that suffered, without protesting, the construction of certain buildings of the most disgustingly ugly kind.

The modern Italian taste is dominating us, and the contagion is such that the spots reserved for artists, in this great, popular, and *bourgeois* bazaar, gave one the impression of a huge country circus or advertising show.

I should not protest against the reign of the scientists, if the nature of their work and their discoveries did not constrain me to notice that they are, above all, commercial experimenters.

It is not their fault, perhaps. But it looks as if the run of the human thought is dammed between two walls, that never will be overrun: industry and sale.

In the beginning of the many civilizations, man's soul had recourse to art. One would think that a jealous divinity said to him: "I forbid you to think of those things. Just concern yourself about your material life, like an animal, and I shall cause you to make a myriad of discoveries."

And, in fact, to-day the powerfully seducing emotion of the artistic centuries seems to be dead, while minds of another bent are awakening to invent machines of all kinds and surprising instruments, or to combine substances, and thereby obtain wonderfully stupefying results. And all that to supply the physical wants of man, or to kill him.

The ideal conceptions, such as those of pure and disinterested science, or those of Galileo, Newton, and Pascal, seem absent in us, while our imagination appears more and more easily excited by the desire of searching for discoveries useful to our existence.

But does not the genius of the one who, with one grand leap of his mind, jumped from the fall of an apple to the great law that reigns over this whole universe seem born of a more divine germ than that of the sharp American inventor, the marvelous manufacturer of bells, megaphones, and lightning apparatus?

Is not that the secret vice of the modern mind, the sign of its inferiority in its triumph?

I may be entirely wrong. At all events, these things which interest us to-day in a practical way do not absorb us as do the ancient forms of thought, for we are far too much the poor, irritable slaves of a dream of delicate beauty that haunts and spoils our lives.

I felt that it would be very pleasant to revisit Florence, so immediately resolved to do so.

CHAPTER II

NIGHT

ALTHOUGH out of the port of Cannes since three o'clock in the morning, we could still feel the breezes wafted from the land during the night. Then a slight breath of sea air came to push our yacht, covered with sails, toward the Italian coast.

It is a boat of twenty tons, painted white, with an imperceptible golden thread surrounding it, just as a girdle would encircle a swan. Its sails of brand-new canvas, under the rays of an August sun, throwing flames on the water, look like the silky wings of a bird against the blue sky. The jibsails, light triangles, rounded out by a breath of wind, stretch themselves outward, and the mainsail is slack under its fifty-four-foot peak, which points upward like an arrow; the mizzensail, at the stern of the boat, flaps in a sleepy way.

Soon every one is dozing on the deck. It is a

typical summer afternoon on the Mediterranean Sea. The wind has died away; the fierce sun fills the sky and turns the sea into a soft bluish sheet, motionless and without a ripple, asleep, as it were, under a glittering, misty dawn, that gives one the impression of being the water's perspiration.

Notwithstanding the awnings which I had put up to protect me from the sun, the heat is so great that I am forced to go below and rest on a divan.

It is always cool inside. The yacht is of deep draught, built to navigate in the northern seas and to resist rough weather. A crew and six passengers, or seven, possibly, can live comfortably in this floating abode, and eight can sit at dinner in the little dining-room.

The interior is finished in varnished pine, framed with teakwood, brightened by the brass of the locks, hinges, and chandeliers, all the gay yellow brasses that belong to the luxury of yachts.

How strange this new change, after the clamor of Paris! I do not hear a sound now, not a sound. Every quarter of an hour, perhaps, the sailor at the helm, almost asleep, gives a slight cough, and the clock, hanging on the wall, makes a noise which seems formidable in this silence of the heavens and the sea.

And this ticking of the clock, which alone disturbs the quiet of the elements, gives me the wonderful sensation of the endless solitudes, where the murmurs of the worlds, hushed at only a few yards above their surfaces, are imperceptible in the silence of the universe.

It seems as if something of this eternal calm of space comes down and spreads itself over the motionless sea on this stifling hot day. It is oppres-

sive, soporific, annihilating, like the contact with the infinite vacuum. The will surrenders, thought stops, and sleep takes hold of both body and soul.

Night was approaching when I awoke. A few breaths of twilight breeze, hardly hoped for, swept us along until the sun went down.

We were very near the coast, in sight of the city of San Remo, but there was no hope of reaching it that night. Other villages or small towns were spread at the foot of the high gray mountain and looked like packs of white linen put out to dry on the beach. A few vapors smoked, as it were, on the slopes of the Alps, hiding the valleys in their rise toward the mountain crests that made a beautifully dented line against a rose-and-lilac sky.

Night came upon us; the mountains disappeared, and fires were lighted on the water's edge all along the coast.

A delicious odor of cooking, coming from the interior of the yacht, mingled agreeably with the salt sea air.

After dinner I lay at full length on deck. This quiet day of drifting had wiped out all there was in my mind as a sponge clears a tarnished glass; and memories crowded upon my thoughts, memories of the life I had left behind me, of people I knew well, had observed, or loved.

Nothing makes the mind travel and the imagination wander like being alone at sea, under the sky, on a hot night. I felt excited, vibrating in all my being, as if I had been drinking some rich wine, inhaling ether, or were still in the embrace of a beloved one.

The nocturnal coolness moistened my skin in a sort of imperceptible bath of salt-water vapor. The

slight shiver caused by the cooling air went through my limbs, entered my lungs, and body and soul were refreshed, almost beatified.

Are they more or less happy, those who experience sensations through the entire surface of their skin as perfectly as they do through the medium of their eyes, mouth, nostrils, or ears?

It is a rare and much-to-be-dreaded faculty, perhaps, this highly nervous and much diseased excitability of the epiderm which is communicated to all the organs and which creates certain emotions in the face of the simplest physical impressions, making one feel sorrowful and joyful according to the change of temperature, or to the fragrant odors emanating from the soil, or as the day is bright or gloomy.

To be unable to enter a theater, because the contact with the crowds affects in an inexplicable manner the entire organism; to be unable to go into a ballroom, because the fictitious gayety and the whirling motion of the waltzers irritate like an insult; to feel suddenly happy or melancholic, without any apparent good reason, according to the decorations or combinations of light in a room, and experience, by the grouping together of certain perceptions, an indefinable physical satisfaction which nothing can reveal to a person not possessing a truly delicate organism—is it a happiness or a misfortune?

I do not know; but if the nervous system is not sensitive to a point which reaches pain or ecstasy, it can only give us very ordinary sensations and vulgar gratifications.

This mist of the sea was like a caress, filling me with happiness. It spread very near under the heavens, and I watched with delight the stars envel-

oped in these gauzelike veils, looking somewhat paler in the dark firmament. The coast had now disappeared behind this vapor, which floated over the waters and surrounded the stars with a certain halo.

One would have thought that some supernatural hand had packed the earth in fleecy clouds, as if about to send it to some unknown destination.

Suddenly, through this snowy shadow, a sound of distant music, from an unknown source, came over the sea. I thought some aërial orchestra was hovering in space to give me a concert. The faint but clear sounds, possessing charming, sonorous tones, threw into the night a murmur of operatic music.

A voice spoke near me:

"Hum!" said the sailor, "it's Sunday, and there's music in the public park of San Remo."

I listened, so much surprised that I was afraid it was only a dream. I listened a long while, infinitely charmed, to the nocturnal music wafted by the breeze through space.

But now the sound swelled, became louder, and seemed to gallop toward us. It was so fantastic that I got up to listen. It was becoming more and more distinct, every sound, and was evidently approaching me; but how? Upon what phantom raft would it appear? It was coming nearer and nearer, but so rapidly that I peered into the darkness excitedly; and, next, as if by magic, I was bathed in a hot breeze, fragrant with aromatic plants, the strong perfume of the myrtle, the mint, and the citron, with lavender and thyme scorched on the mountain by the burning sun.

It was the land breeze which was about to rise, overcharged with the breath of the coast, and which

was carrying out to sea, intermingled with the odor of the Alpine plants, those wonderful harmonious strains of music.

I remained breathless, intoxicated with such delightful sensations that my troubled senses seemed to bring me to the verge of delirium. I really did not know whether I was breathing music, or hearing perfumes, or even sleeping up in the stars.

This breeze, impregnated with the perfume of the flowers, blew us out to sea, where it evaporated into the night. The sounds gradually died out as the ship moved on.

I could not sleep, and I wondered how a modern poet, of the so-called school of symbolism, would have explained the confused nervous vibration which I had just experienced, and which seems to me, in clear and plain language, untranslatable. No doubt, some of those poets who take such pains to give expression to the multifarious artistic sensitiveness of thought would have come out with honor, giving in euphonious rhymes, replete with intentional sonorousness, incomprehensible yet slightly perceptible, a fair description of this extraordinary blending of perfumed sounds, starry mist, and sweet land breeze, sowing music in the night air.

A sonnet from their patron, Baudelaire, came back to my mind:

"Nature is a temple where living columns
Sometimes allow jumbled words to escape;
Man walks through a forest of symbols
That watch him with familiar looks.

"Like long-drawn echoes mingling in the distance,
In a dark and deep unity
As vast as night, as vast as light,
Perfumes, colors, and sounds answer each other.

"There are perfumes as sweet as a child's lips,
Sweet as a clarinet, green as the meadows,
—And others, again, strong and overpowering,
Having the breadth of infinite space,
Like ambergris, musk, benzoin, and incense,
Which exalt the enraptured mind and senses."

Had I not just felt the true meaning of this verse, to the very marrow of my bones:

"Perfumes, colors, and sounds answer each other."

And not only do they answer each other in nature, but within us, too, and lose themselves sometimes "in a dark and deep unity," as the poet says, by the repercussive pressure of one organ against another.

Medical science is fully aware of this. Many articles have been written on the subject, under the title of *Colored Audition.*

It has been proved that, in certain nervous and highstrung natures, when one sense receives a shock which affects it, the concussion of the impression is communicated, in the same manner as the ripples of a wave, to the other senses, each of which responds in its own peculiar way. This music in certain beings evokes visions of the different colors. It must then be a kind of sensitive contagion, transformed according to the normal action of each cerebral apparatus thus affected.

In this way can be explained the famous sonnet by Arthur Rimbaud, which speaks of the colors of the vowels, an article of faith which has been adopted by the school of symbolism:

"A, black; E, white; I, red; U, green; O, blue; vowels."

Is he right or wrong? As far as the man who breaks stones on the road, and many of our great men, too, are concerned, this poet is an impostor or

a fool. But, in the minds of others, he has discovered and expressed an absolute truth, though these explorers of minute perceptions must always differ a little in their opinions on the shades and the images that can be evoked in us by the mysterious vibrations of vowels or of music.

If it is recognized by the science of to-day that musical notes affecting certain organisms can arouse visions of colors; if *sol* can be red; *fa,* lilac or green, why could not these same sounds arouse tastes in the mouths and odors in the nostrils? Why should not fastidious though somewhat hysterical natures be affected by everything through the medium of every one of their senses, at the same time; and why, too, could not the symbolist reveal a delightful sensitiveness to those of their own sort, incurable and privileged poets that they are? This is more a question of artistic pathology than of estheticism pure and simple.

Is it not possible, however, that some of those interesting neurotic writers (neurotic by willful training) have reached such a degree of excitability that every impression received creates in them a concerted action of all the perceptive faculties?

And is that not the very thing which their poetry of sounds, apparently unintelligible, tries to express when it sings the whole gamut of sensations, and attracts one's attention by the grouping of words more according to their rational qualities of harmony than their recognized signification to untranslatable meanings, which are obscure to us but clear to them?

For artists have come to an end of their resources; nothing is unpublished, unknown, either in the manner of expression or in images, even. Since

the beginning of time, all the flowers of this particular field have been culled. And now it happens that, in their powerlessness to create, they feel in a confused and indefinite way that there may, some day, be a broadening of the soul and the senses. But the mind, at present, has five gates, half opened and chained, known as the five senses, and it is at these five gates that men enamored of the new art are tugging with all their might.

The mind, that blind and hard-working Unknown, can know, understand, discover nothing except through the senses. They are its only providers, its only agents between Universal Nature and itself. It works exclusively on the materials furnished by them, which they, in turn, can gather only in proportion to their own sensitiveness, strength, and acuteness.

The value of thought evidently depends directly upon the value of the organs, and its breadth is limited to their number.

Monsieur Taine, however, has masterfully studied and developed this idea.

There are five senses, and only five. They reveal to us, by interpreting them, certain properties of surrounding matter, which possesses also a number of other phenomena that we are unable to perceive.

Suppose man had been created without ears; he would exist in much the same manner as now, except that to him the universe would be mute; he would have no conception of noise, of music, which are but transformed vibrations.

But suppose he had been given other organs, powerful and sensitive, gifted with the faculty of transforming into acute perceptions the actions and

attributes of all the inexplicable things that surround us—how much more varied would be the extent of our knowledge and emotions.

It is into this impenetrable domain that every artist attempts to enter, by tormenting, violating, and exhausting the mechanism of his thoughts. Those whose brains have given way, Heine, Baudelaire, Balzac, Byron, the vagabond; those who sought death, disconsolate at the misfortune of being a great poet—Musset, De Goncourt, and so many others—were they not all shattered by this very effort to break down the material barrier that imprisons the human mind?

Yes, our organs are the nourishers and the masters of the artistic genius. The ear begets the musician, and the eye gives birth to the painter. All senses coöperate to give the poet his sensations. With the novelist, the sense of vision usually predominates. It does so to such an extent that it becomes easy to detect, on reading a sincere and well-written novel, the physical qualities and attributes of an author's glance. The magnifying of details, in their importance or minuteness, whether they encroach on the general scheme or not, goes to show all the degrees and differences of myopia. The coördination of the whole, the proportion of the lines, and the preferred perspective to a certain minuteness of observation, the careless omission of some slight information which would be a clue to the characteristics of a person or a group—do not these indicate the far-seeing though careless glance of a far-sighted person?

CHAPTER III

THE ITALIAN COAST

THE sky is veiled by clouds. The budding day has a grayish tint, through the mists of night, which spread like a wall, thicker in some places, between dawn and us.

A vague fear takes hold of us, which makes us sad, that until evening these clouds will keep nature mourning, as it were, and we are continually throwing impatient glances at the sky, with a silent prayer upon our lips.

But we can guess, by certain lightened spots which now and then divide the more opaque masses, that the sun is shining above these clouds and is illuminating the blue sky and their snowy surface. We wait and hope.

Little by little they become paler, thinner, and seem to melt. One feels that the sun is burning them, gnawing them, and even crushing them with

all its ardor; that the immense ceiling of clouds is too weak to resist, and that it must break and part under the great weight of glaring light.

A small spot lightens up in the mist, and a faint glimmer is seen. A breach is made, through which glistens the sunshine, spreading as it falls. It looks as if this little hole were on fire. It is like a huge mouth opening wider and wider, all ablaze, with fired lips, pouring on the waves a cascade of golden light.

Then, simultaneously in a thousand places, the shadowy arch breaks and goes to pieces, allowing a hundred arrows to rain down on the water through its wounds, thus scattering over the horizon the full joyousness of the radiant sun.

The air has freshened through the night; a quiver of wind caresses the sea, hardly causing a ripple, with so slight a tickling of its blue, silky surface. In front of us, on a high, rocky peak, which seems to rise out of the sea and lean upon the hills, nestles a little town, painted rose color by the hand of man, as the horizon is by the victorious dawn. A few blue houses, here and there, make charming blue dots, as it were. It looks like the abode of a princess of the *Arabian Nights*. It is Port-Maurice.

When one has seen it thus, one ought not to land there. I did, however.

Inside, it has the appearance of being in ruins, as well as its houses, strewn like crumbs along both sides of the streets. A part of the city which has fallen down, probably during an earthquake, shows from the top to the bottom of the hill, as if on shelves, a row of roofless, dismantled dwellings, old houses of plaster, through which the wind blows. And the rose tint, so pretty from a distance where

it harmonized with the rising sun, on closer view shows a woefully faded, smeared effect, tarnished by the sun and washed out by the rain.

Throughout the streets, tortuously winding corridors full of stones and dust, floats a nameless odor, so penetrating, so strong, so tenacious, that I hurried back to the yacht, my eyes full of dust, my stomach upset.

Yet it is one of the principal towns of that province. To one first setting foot in this part of Italy it looks like a flag of misery.

Facing it, on the other side of the gulf, is Oneglia, a very filthy and ill-smelling town, though its aspect is less miserable and more lively.

Under the large portals of the Royal College, which stand wide open during the vacation, an old woman sits mending a sordidly filthy mattress.

We enter the harbor of Savona. A large group of manufactories or foundries, whose chimneys are fed every day by the coal brought here by four or five English steamers, emit through their giant openings volumes of curling smoke that fall back on the city in a shower of soot, blown here and there by the wind, like snow from Hades, as it were.

Never go into that harbor, sailors of small sailing vessels, if you wish to keep your pretty white sails clean.

Savona is charming, though, a typical Italian town; its narrow streets are full of bustling merchants, with fruit spread on the ground, ripe, red tomatoes, black or yellow grapes, transparent, as if filled with light; green lettuce cleansed in a hurry, the leaves of which spread about in abundance—it gives one the impression of an invasion of the city by vegetable gardens.

After returning to the yacht, I saw along the wharf, on an immense table which filled the deck of a Neapolitan boat, a startling sight—something strange that looked like a murderers' banquet.

Bleeding, murderously red, as it were, giving the boat the color and air of a butchery, a massacre, of torn flesh, even, were spread out in front of thirty swarthy sailors sixty or perhaps a hundred quarters of the blood-red watermelons.

It looked as if these men were burying their teeth in raw flesh, as do captured wild animals in their cages. It was a feast. The crew of a near-by ship has been invited. Every one is happy. The red caps on their heads are not half so vivid in color as the heart of the fruit.

When night had fallen upon us, I went back to the town.

The sound of music made me cross the entire place. I struck an avenue where groups of *bourgeois* and common people were walking leisurely toward the evening concert, given two or three times a week by the municipal band.

These orchestras, in this musical country, are equal, even in the smaller towns, to those of our best theaters. I recalled the one I had heard on the deck of my yacht one night, the memory of which remained as one of the sweetest sensations I had ever experienced.

This avenue ended in a square almost on the beach, and there, in the semi-darkness, relieved by only a few yellow gaslights, this orchestra played, I do not quite remember what pieces, close to the rippling waves.

The latter rather heavily, although the sea breeze had died out, trailed all along the beach, their mo-

notonously regulated murmur, which seemed to accompany the lively music of the instruments; the violet sky, of a brilliantly shining tint, filled with a golden dust of stars, let fall upon us a very slight darkness. The night, with its transparent shadows, dropped over the silent crowd, hardly to be heard whispering, as some walked around the inclosure for the musicians, sat on the benches in the promenade, on lonely rocks on the beach, or on large beams to be used to finish the construction of the framework of a big ship near by.

I cannot say whether the women of Savona are beautiful, but I do know that they are charming, as they go bareheaded at night, each carrying a fan. It was fascinating, this noiseless beating of imprisoned wings, white, black, or spotted, all fluttering like large moths held between the fingers. With each woman, whether resting or walking, I found this vague effort of the leaves, as it were, to escape, while they seemingly made the air cooler, giving a feminine, coquettish aroma to it which was most agreeable for a man to inhale.

Presently, in the midst of the palpitating fans and uncovered heads all about me, I began to fancy myself in fairyland, as I was wont to do when a mere boy at boarding school in the cold dormitory at night, when, before dropping off to sleep, I mused about the contents of a novel secretly devoured under the cover of my desk. Sometimes, too, deep in my old heart, poisoned with incredulity, there is an awakening, for a few instants, of the simple innocence of my youthful heart.

One of the most beautiful things that can be seen in this world is Genoa viewed from the sea.

At the head of the bay the city rises as if from out of the water. On both sides, which make a curve around Genoa, as if to protect and caress it, fifteen small towns, neighbors, vassals, servants, reflect and bathe their light-colored houses in the waters. To the left are Cogoleto, Arenzano, Voltri, Pra, Pegli, Sestri-Ponente, and San Pier d'Arena; to the right, Sturla, Quarto, Quinto, Nervi, Bogliasco, Sori, Recco, Camogli, the last white spot on the cape of Porto-Fino, which closes the gulf on the southeast.

Genoa rises above her immense harbor on the first hill of the Alps, which stand out behind it like a giant wall. On the jetty is a small square tower, a lighthouse, called "the Lantern," which looks like a gigantic candle.

We pass into the outer port, an enormous basin, well sheltered, where innumerable tugboats steam about seeking trade; then, after rounding the eastern jetty, we enter the port itself, crowded with ships, those ships of the south and the Orient, with their delightful coloring, the triangular, one-masted ships, painted and rigged in the most fantastic manner, carrying on their prows blue or gilt Madonnas, or even strange-looking animals, which are regarded as sacred protectors.

This fleet, with its good Virgins and talismans, is lined up along the wharves, their pointed and uneven bows turned toward the center of the basin. Then come the powerful steamers, situated according to the company to which they belong, narrow and high, with colossal outlines. There are also, in the midst of these sea pilgrims, brigs and three-masted ships, clothed in white, like the Arabs, on whose dress the sunlight appears to slide off.

If there is nothing prettier than the entrance to the port of Genoa, equally there is nothing uglier than the entrance to the city. The wharf is a swamp of rubbish, and the narrow streets are inclosed like tortuous corridors between two winding rows of very tall houses, from which emanate pestilential and sickening odors.

One feels in Genoa as in Florence, still more so in Venice, that these once aristocratic cities have fallen into the hands of the people.

Here is recalled the memory of these fierce men who fought or transacted business on the seas, who then, with the money thus obtained, either from conquests or from barterings, had those astonishing palaces built which still line the principal streets. When we enter these magnificent residences, odiously daubed by the descendants of the haughtiest of all republics; when we compare the style, the courts, the gardens, the porticos, the interior galleries, and all the decorative and gorgeous appointments, with the barbaric wealth of the finest mansions of modern Paris, with the palaces of millionaires who only know how to handle money, who are utterly incapable of conceiving, desiring, or creating something new and beautiful at the same time—we understand, then, that the real supremacy of the intelligence, the meaning of the rare beauty of form, the perfection of proportions and lines, have disappeared from our democratic society, composed now of rich financiers without taste and *parvenus* without traditions.

It is even an interesting thing to observe the hackneyed and commonplace atmosphere of the modern hotels. Enter the old palaces of Genoa and you will see a series of courtyards with galleries and

columns, marble staircases of marvelous beauty, all of which were designed and executed by true artists for men of cultivated taste.

Enter the old châteaux of France, and you will notice the same tendency toward a new and original ornamentation.

But enter, next, any one of the wealthiest homes of Paris at the present time, and you will admire curious ancient articles, carefully catalogued, labeled, and exhibited in glass cases, according to their known value, vouched for by experts, but in no instance will you be struck by an original and new invention of the different parts of the mansion.

The architect is supposed to construct a beautiful house, costing several millions, of which he is to receive a fixed percentage, according to the amount of work he puts upon it.

The upholsterer, for a given remuneration, takes charge of the interior decoration. As the gentlemen of this industry are not unaware of their clients' lack of artistic knowledge, and as they would not dare suggest anything new to them, they are perfectly satisfied to repeat what they have already done for others.

After one has visited, in Genoa, these ancient palaces, and admired a few paintings, especially the three masterpieces of Van Dyck, there is nothing more to see except the Campo-Santo, which is a modern cemetery, an extraordinary museum of funeral structures, the most wonderful, the most dismal, the most comical in all the world. All along the four sides of an immense gallery, in a giant cloister, opening on a yard paved with the flat white gravestones of the poor, one passes a series of statues of tradesmen mourning their dead.

What an extraordinary, mysterious idea! The work, in its polished execution, in the chiseling of these figures, bespeaks a remarkable technique and a highly artistic talent. The material of the robes, of the waistcoats and trousers, is depicted in a most realistic manner. I saw a figure wearing a *moiré* silk gown, the reproduction of which, with its folds and creases, was indescribably realistic; and, yet, in my opinion, nothing is so ridiculously grotesquely, ignominiously commonplace as the method of people who thus mourn their beloved ones.

Whose is the fault? The sculptor is the one to blame, as he saw only what was commonplace in the physiognomy of the modern tradesman, and it is no wonder, for they can no longer distinguish the divine spark which the Flemish artists had so well seized and which they reproduced when they depicted even the most ordinary and sometimes the ugliest types of their race. It may be that the *bourgeois* himself is to blame, he who has been tossed about by this low, democratic civilization like a pebble on the beach, whose distinctive characteristics have been worn away, and who has lost, in this constant friction, the last marks that remained of the originality with which all social classes were endowed by nature.

The Genoese are very proud of this astonishing museum, which only bewilders the observer's mind.

From the port of Genoa to the point of Porto-Pino is a series of towns, a scattering of houses on the beach, between the light blue of the sea and the

brilliant green of the mountain. A breeze from the southeast compels us to tack. It is not strong, though its sudden gusts make the yacht keel a little to one side, or dart suddenly ahead, like a runaway horse; and both sides are adorned with streaks of white foam. Then the wind abates, the boat regains its quiet pace, now gliding nearer the shore, now farther from it. About two o'clock the captain surveys the horizon with his glass to make out, according to the quantity of sails and the tacking of the other vessels, the direction and strength of the wind, which, in these parts, sweeps with great suddenness across the water, or comes in gentle zephyrs, as capricious as the moods of a pretty woman.

"We'll have to take in sail, sir," he announces; "the two schooners ahead of us have just hauled down their topsails. Heavy winds over there."

The order was given, and the inflated canvas slid down from the top of the mast, flapping limply and palpitating somewhat, as a bird that has just been shot.

There were no waves. A few ripples foamed a little, here and there; but suddenly, in the distance, I saw the water was white as if some one had thrown a sheet over it. It was coming, approaching rapidly, and when this white line was a few yards away from us the sails of the yacht sustained a rough, brusque shock from the wind that seemed to gallop over the sea, scattering the flying spray, which resembled the feathers plucked from the breast of a swan. All this foam torn from the waters, this thin layer of flying froth, flew about and was scattered by the invisible whistling gust of wind. With our vessel lying on the side, almost sub-

merged by the water, which dashed noisily against the deck, with weather shrouds drawn taut, with masts and spars creaking, we rushed along speed-mad, as it were. It really is a unique sensation, this excitement of holding between your hands, with muscles strained from head to foot, the iron bar that guides through the storm this wild yet inert animal made of canvas and wood.

This fury of the air lasted only three-quarters of an hour; then suddenly, when the Mediterranean had resumed its beautiful blue tint, it seemed to me that the wrath of the sky was appeased, so calm became the atmosphere. It was a fit of passion that had passed away, or the end of a rough morning; and the joyous laugh of the sun again brightened up the world.

We were just approaching the cape, where I perceived at its far end, toward the other extremity, at the foot of a steep rock, a church and three houses. Who on earth could live there? What can the people do? How can they communicate with other living beings, except through one of the little canoes pulled up on the narrow beach?

Now we have cleared the cape. The line of the coast is uninterrupted until Porto-Venera is reached, at the entrance of the Gulf of Spezzia; all this region is incomparably fascinating.

In a wide, deep bay opening before us we can see Santa-Margherita, then Rapallo and Chiavari, and farther away Sestri–Servante.

The yacht, having tacked about, glided along only two cable lengths from the rocks, and at the end of the cape, which we had just rounded, we discovered suddenly a gorge where the sea enters, a gorge hidden away, barely seen, filled with pine,

olive, and chestnut trees. The tiny village of Porto-Fino curls about this quiet basin, in a half circular form.

We sailed slowly through the narrow strait which joins this delightful natural harbor to the sea, and entered the amphitheater of houses, crowned by a forest of a refreshing green hue, both being reflected in the quiet, round mirror where a few fishing smacks seem to be dozing.

One of them, manned by an old sailor, comes toward us. He greets and welcomes us, points a place for anchoring, takes hold of our cable to moor us to land, returns to offer his services and advice, in fine, does the honors of this fishing hamlet. He is the harbor master.

I never, perhaps, experienced a pleasanter sensation than when I entered this delightful green creek. I had a feeling of rest, soothing to the nerves, such as is afforded by the relaxation from the vain struggle of life's battles; and even the delightful sensation of hearing the noise of the falling anchor, telling me we were to remain here for some time, was as nothing compared to the first feeling.

For the last eight days now, I have been rowing. The yacht is motionless in the middle of this quiet miniature harbor; and I meander in my canoe along the coast, in the grottos where the ocean roars in invisible gaps, and around strange, lonely little islands, which it showers with endless kisses at each uprising, and over rocks wholly submerged in water or covered with seaweeds. I love to see, floating under the water, waving in the barely sensible motion of the waves, those long red or green weeds, in which are mingled and hidden, some even gliding in and out of the plants, numberless throngs of young

fishes, just hatched. One would take them for the live progeny of silver needles.

When I glance up at the rocks on the banks, I see groups of naked boys, with swarthy little bodies, all of whom stare in surprise at me. They are innumerable, like the young fishes of the sea, just like a tribe of young new-born tritons, frolicking and scampering up the granite rocks, to drink in the glorious air.

We have left Porto-Fino to spend a little time at Santa-Margherita. It is not a seaport, but it lies deep in a gulf, somewhat sheltered by a mole.

Here the land is so fascinating that it makes one forget the sea. The city is protected by two mountains converging into an angle whose vertex is cut through by a valley leading to Genoa. On both these hills innumerable little paths between two stone walls three feet high intersect one another, go up and down, cross and recross, now narrow and stony, now assuming the form of ravines or stairs, as they divide countless fields or rather orchards of olive and fig trees, garlanded with red vines. Through the foliage of the latter, climbing in the trees, we can catch a glimpse of the blue sea, red capes, white villages, sloping pine forests, and the high mountain crests of gray granite. In front of the houses, scattered here and there, may be seen women making lace. In fact, throughout these parts you could hardly strike a doorway where there are not two or three of these women employed in this hereditary work, handling with delicate fingers numerous white or black threads, from which dangle, with a continual hop and skip, little yellow-colored sticks. These women are often pretty, tall, and of proud demean-

or, though careless in dress and not at all coquettish. Many still show traces of Saracen blood.

One day, in the street of a hamlet, one of them passed near me, leaving me an impression of such exquisite beauty as I never had seen before.

Under a heavy coil of dark hair which flitted about her forehead, evidently betraying a hasty, careless arrangement, were the oval, brown features of an Oriental or a daughter of the Moors, whose graceful carriage she still retained, but the Florentine sun had tinted her skin with gold. Her eyes—such eyes!—were large, and of the deepest black, and she seemed to let slip unconsciously a caress through the longest and thickest eyelashes I ever had beheld. The skin around her eyes was darkened so strangely that had I not seen her in full daylight I should have suspected her of having had recourse to art.

When we meet such beautiful creatures in tatters, why can we not seize them and carry them away, if only to adorn them and tell them they are pretty, as we would lose ourselves in the raptures of a genuine admiration? What if they do not understand the mystery of our enthusiasm, remain irresponsive, like all bewitching idols, made only to be loved by frenzied beings, trying to find words worthy of expressing the praise of their beauty?

However, if I had the choice between the most beautiful of living beings and that of the famous picture of a woman painted by Titian which I was contemplating a week later in the great Hall of the Council, I would take Titian's reclining woman.

Florence—which appeals to me as the city where

I should most ardently have loved to live in the olden times—which still retains, for my eyes and my heart, an inexpressible charm, which attracts me, almost in a sensual manner, through the painting of this woman, the quintessence of a dream, prodigiously carnal in its suggestions! When I think of this city, so full of marvels that one invariably returns at the end of the day's promenade thoroughly tired, like a wandering hunter, among my souvenirs appears the remembrance of the long piece of canvas, on which this tall woman lies, naked and blonde, awake and serenely calm.

Then, after this conjuring of the most powerful seductive charm of a human body, the thought of the sweet and pure Madonnas rises in my mind, those of Raphael first, the "Madonna of the Goldfinch," the "Madonna Granduca," the "Madonna of the Chair," and others besides, those of the minor artists of the ancient times, with their simple features, light hair, idealized and mystical, and those of the more material artists, of a bloomingly healthy appearance.

As one wanders and meanders in this unique city, and even throughout the whole of Tuscany, where the men of the Renaissance strewed masterpieces with a free hand, one wonders at the glorious and fruitful minds, intoxicated with the sentiment of the beautiful, madly productive, of those generations throbbing in an artistic delirium. In the churches of the small towns, where one goes to see things that have not already been pointed out to the ordinary traveler, one discovers on the walls, or hidden behind the benches for the choir, priceless paintings of those modest masters, who did not sell their canvases in the yet unexplored America.

but kept on working, though hopelessly poverty-stricken, for art's sake, like pious workmen.

And this race, which never faltered in its course, has left nothing inferior. The same ray of imperishable beauty that appeared from the brush of painters and from the chisel of sculptors grew larger in the shape of lines of stones on the face of the monuments. Their churches and chapels are filled with sculptures of Lucca della Robbia, Donatello, and Michelangelo; their bronze portals are by Bonannus or by John of Bologna.

Upon reaching the Piazza della Signoria, facing the Loggia dei Lanzi, we perceived, grouped together under the same portico, the "Rape of the Sabines" and "Hercules Wrestling with the Centaur"; "Nessus," by John of Bologna; "Perseus with the Head of the Medusa," by Benvenuto Cellini, and "Judith and Holofernes," by Donatello. It sheltered, also, only a few years ago, the "David" of Michelangelo.

But the more one is bewildered, the more one is overcome by the seductive charms of a trip through this forest of works of art, the more one is seized, too, with a strange, uneasy feeling which soon mingles itself with the joy of seeing. It comes from the amazing contrast of the modern crowd, so commonplace, so ignorant of what it is looking at, and of the places it inhabits. You readily feel that the delicate soul, the proud and refined feelings of the former dwellers, no longer furnish the zest of life to those heads burdened with round, chocolate-colored hats, nor do they animate the indifferent eyes, exalt the vulgar tastes and desires of this dreamless, matter-of-fact population.

On my way back to the coast, I stopped at Pisa,

to see once more the Duomo. Who will ever be able to explain the melancholic, penetrating charm of certain of those almost dead towns?

Pisa is one of them. No sooner have you entered it than you feel a melancholy languor, a powerless desire to remain and to run away, to flee from this listless, lazy life and yet to stay and undergo the mournful charm of its air, its heaven, its houses, its streets that are inhabited by the most quiet, sad, and silent of people.

Life seems to have left it as did the sea, when it abandoned its port, formerly supreme, and stretched a plain and gave birth to a forest between the new shore and the forsaken city.

The river Arno glides through, like a yellow, undulating streak, between high walls supporting the two principal promenades, lined with rows of yellow houses, some hotels, and a few modest-looking palaces.

On the wharf itself, where alone it interrupts the sinuous curve of the river, the little chapel of Santa-Maria della Spina, belonging to the French architecture of the thirteenth century, shows just above the water its artistically wrought profile. It looks, on the bank of the river, like a quaint Gothic washstand of the Madonna, where the angels came nightly to cleanse the faded finery of the Madonnas.

But through the Via Santa Maria one reaches the Square of the Duomo.

For those who are still to be affected by the sentiment of the beautiful and the mystical power of the monuments, assuredly nothing is more surprising and thrilling than this vast, grass-carpeted square, hemmed in by high bulwarks that inclose, in their totally different attitudes, the Duomo, the

Campo-Santo, the Baptistry, and the Leaning Tower

When you reach the edge of this wild and deserted field, surrounded by old walls, suddenly before your eyes rise these four vast marble creations, so extraordinary in their profile, color, harmonious and superb grace, and you are paralyzed with astonishment and admiration, as if you were before the rarest and most grandiose spectacle that human art can offer to your gaze.

But soon the Duomo attracts and rivets your whole attention with its inexpressible harmony, the irresistible power of its proportions and magnificent grandeur of its façade.

It is a basilica of the Tuscan style of the eleventh century, built of white marble with black and colored inlaid work. You do not experience, at the sight of this perfect example of Roman-Italian architecture, the same awe you feel in the presence of Gothic cathedrals, with their daring height, the elegant charm of their towers and belfries, the stone lacework in which they are enveloped, and the enormous disproportion between their size and their support.

But you remain so entranced with the irreproachable proportions, the beauty of the lines, of the decorations of the façade below, of the pilasters joined by arcades above, of four galleries of columns, each growing smaller, that the attraction of the monument reminds you of a beautiful poem.

It is useless to describe these things; one must see them in their own classical sky, of a peculiar blue, where the clouds, rolling about in silver masses, seem to have been copied from the paintings of Tuscan artists. For those old artists were realists,

thoroughly imbued with the Italian atmosphere; and those who have imitated them under another sky are only the counterfeiters.

Behind the Cathedral, the Campanile, forever leaning over and threatening to fall, gives one an uncomfortable feeling, upsetting our notions of equilibrium; and facing it is the Baptistry, which, with its tall conical cupola, stands before the door of the Campo-Santo.

And in this ancient cemetery, whose frescos are classed like paintings of the greatest interest, stretches out a delightful cloister, with a subtle and gloomy charm, in the midst of which two lime trees hide under their greenery such a quantity of dead wood that the wind shakes it with a strange sound like the rattling of bones.

The days go by and the summer is drawing to an end. I wish to see another far-away country, where other men have left memories, less vivid, perhaps, though none the less eternal. These people are the only ones that have really endowed their country with a Universal Exposition that will always be visited in the centuries to come.

CHAPTER IV

SICILY

PEOPLE are convinced, in France, that Sicily is a wild country, difficult of access, and even dangerous to visit. Now and then a traveler, who is thought very daring, takes the risk to go as far as Palermo, and returns saying that the city is a very interesting one. And that is all. But in what respect are Palermo and Sicily interesting? No one knows. In truth, the whole thing is only a question of style. This island, the pearl of the Mediterranean, is not on the list of those countries usually visited by tourists, which it is considered in good taste to know, which, like Italy, make up a part of the education of a well-bred man.

From two special points of view, however, Sicily should attract travelers, because its natural and artistic beauties are as singular as they are wonderful. Every one knows how fertile is this land, which was once known as the granary of

Italy, and which all nations, at one time or other, invaded and mastered, so strong was their desire to possess it, which was the cause of so many men fighting and dying for her sake as if she had been a beautiful woman, ardently desired. It is, just as much as Spain, the country of oranges and the land of flowers, whose air, in springtime, is like a perfumed breath; and every night it kindles, far above the sea, the monster lantern of Etna, the largest volcano in Europe. But what constitutes it, above all, a land unique and most interesting in this world is that it is, from one end to the other, a strange and divine museum of architecture.

In this country, still artistic, architecture is dead, in the sense that it seems to have lost the faculty of creating beautiful things with stone, the mysterious secret of the attraction of lines, the sense of peaceful charm in monuments. We do not seem to understand any more that even the simple proportions of a wall can convey to the mind the same artistic delight, the same deep and secret rapture, as is afforded by the sight of a masterpiece of Rembrandt, of Velasquez, or of Paul Veronese.

Sicily had the good fortune to be occupied by prolific nations, from both south and north, who covered its territory with works of infinite variety, where mingle, in an unexpected and charming manner, the most contrary influences. From this has sprung a special art, unknown elsewhere, where the influence of the Arab is felt in the midst of Greek and even Egyptian memories, where the harshness of the Gothic style brought here by the Normans is tempered by the wonderful art of Byzantine ornamentation and decoration.

And it is a source of genuine delight to look for

the special marks of each school in these exquisite monuments, to discriminate between the detail from Egypt, with the lanceolated ogives, brought by Arabs, the vaults in high relief, or rather pendentine, resembling the stalactites of marine grottos, and that of the genuine Byzantine ornament or the beautiful Gothic friezes, which awaken memories of the tall cathedrals of colder countries or the low churches built by Norman princes.

After seeing these monuments, which, though belonging to different periods and being of different origin, still have the same character, the same nature, one can truly say that they are neither Gothic nor Arabic nor Byzantine, but Sicilian; one can assert that there is a Sicilian art and style, forever recognizable, which is assuredly more delightful, varied, more highly colored and full of conceptions, than all the other styles of architecture. It is also in Sicily that the most magnificent and complete examples of ancient Greek architecture can be found, in the midst of scenery of peerless beauty.

The passage from Naples to Palermo is the easiest and the best one to take. One is astonished, upon first leaving the boat, at the activity and life of this city of two hundred thousand inhabitants, which is filled with shops. It is noisy, though less animated than Naples, in spite of the fact that it is quite as full of life. The first thing to attract your attention, especially, are the carts. These are little square boxes perched on yellow wheels, decorated with crude and odd designs, representing historical facts, adventures of all kinds, contests, and even the meetings of sovereigns, but especially the battles of Napoleon I and those of the Crusaders. A peculiarly shaped piece of wood and iron secures

the body of the cart to the axle; spokes of the wheels are also made of carved wood. The animal that draws it wears a gay-colored cotton ball on his head and another one on the back, and is harnessed with coquettish, colored straps, each piece of leather being lined with red wool and tiny bells. These painted carts, queer-looking and each one different from the others, passing through the streets, are attractive to the eye as they run about, like puzzles we try to solve.

The general appearance of Palermo is peculiar. The city, lying in the midst of a vast circle of bare-looking mountains of a grayish blue, tinted here and there with red, is divided into four parts by two long, straight streets, forming a cross in the middle. From this crossroad you see, on three sides, the mountain at the end of the immense corridors of houses, and on the fourth the sea, a deep blue spot, which appears to be quite close, as if the town had tumbled into it.

A strong desire haunted my mind, on the very first day of my arrival. I wished to see the Chapel Palatine, which I had been told was a marvel of marvels.

The Chapel Palatine, the most beautiful in the world, the most surprising religious jewel ever evolved by the human mind and the hand of an artist, is inclosed within the heavy edifice of the Palais-Royal, an ancient fortress built by the Normans.

This chapel has nothing remarkable in its exterior, but as we enter the palace we are immediately struck with the beauty of the interior, which is surrounded by columns. A beautiful winding staircase gives a perspective of a startling effect.

Facing the entrance door, another door, cut through the wall of the palace, opens suddenly on a deep and narrow horizon, revealing an endless expanse of country and boundless vistas, which greet the eye through this arched gap and carry it away with irresistible force toward the blue crest of the hills in the distance, above an immense orange grove.

Upon entering the chapel, you are overcome with awe, as when first beholding a most surprising sight whose power is felt before it is understood. The calm and beauty of this little church, which is positively the most wonderful masterpiece imaginable, causes you to stand entranced before these walls with immense mosaics on a golden background, shining with a soft light that dimly illumines the whole edifice, leading one's mind into biblical and heavenly landscapes, where one sees, in fancy, standing against a burning sky, all those who were associated with the life of Christ.

What renders most striking the impression produced by these Sicilian monuments is the fact that their decoration is at first more noticeable than their style of architecture.

The harmony of lines and proportions is only a frame for the blending of the colors.

On entering our Gothic cathedrals, we experience a stern, almost gloomy, sensation. Their grandeur is impressive; but their majestic stateliness does not captivate us. Here we are conquered, affected by that almost sensual impression which color adds to the beauty of form.

The men who conceived and executed these luminous though dim churches must have had an entirely different idea of the religious feeling from that of the architects of German and French cathe-

drals; and their particular concern was that the light should enter these wondrously decorated naves in such a way that it would neither be seen nor felt, but would glide in imperceptibly, just skimming the walls and producing mysterious, delightful effects, as if the illumination came from the walls themselves, or from the golden ceilings peopled with apostles.

The Chapel Palatine, built in 1132 by King Roger II, after the Norman-Gothic style, is a small basilica with three naves. It is only thirty-three meters long by thirteen wide, a toylike affair, a miniature basilica.

Two rows of beautiful marble columns of different colors lead to the cupola, where a colossal figure of Christ, surrounded by angels with outstretched wings, is looking down. The mosaic which fills the back of the lateral chapel is a striking work of art. It represents St. John preaching in the desert. You would take it for a Puvis de Chavannes, but more highly colored, more forceful, truer, and less artificial in appearance, executed at a time of deep religious faith by an inspired artist. The apostle is seen speaking to a few people. Behind him is the desert, and beyond that a few blue mountains, whose soft outlines are lost in the mist—mountains so familiar to the Oriental traveler. About the saint, around and behind him, is a golden and marvelous sky, wherein God seems to abide.

Returning to the entrance, we stop under the pulpit, a single square of red marble, surrounded by a frieze of white marble, inlaid with small mosaics and supported on four columns delicately chiseled. One wonders at what the taste of a true artist can accomplish with so little.

The whole of this wonderful effect is due to the contrast of the marbles and the mosaics. It is this that furnishes their characteristic work. The lower parts of the walls, which are white and are decorated in delicate stone embroideries, bring out forcibly, by the very fact of their simplicity, the wealth of color in the paintings above.

But you discover, even in that small lacework running along the lower wall, delightful things that could be held in the hollow of the hand; for instance, two peacocks, whose beaks are intertwined, carrying a cross between them.

This style of decoration is to be found in many churches in Palermo. The mosaics of the Martorana are, perhaps, even more remarkable in their execution than those of the Palatine Chapel; but there cannot be found in any other monument the same degree of wonderful *ensemble* which makes this divine masterpiece unique.

I come back slowly to the Hotel of the Palms, which has one of the finest gardens in the city, one of those typical gardens of tropical countries, filled with enormous and strange plants. A traveler, seated on a bench, gives me in a few words the events of the past year, and going back to the memories of bygone years, he says, among other things: "This happened when Wagner lived here."

Astonished at this, I inquired: "What, here, in this hotel?" "Why, yes, it was while here that he wrote the last notes of *Parsifal* and corrected the proofs."

And I learn that the illustrious German master spent a whole winter in Palermo, and that he left this town only a few months before his death. Here, as everywhere else he lived, he showed his ungovern-

able temper and unendurable pride, while he left the impression of being the most unsociable of men.

I wished to see the apartment occupied by this genial musician, for it seemed to me that he must have left something of his strong personality, and that I should perhaps find some beloved object, a favorite chair, or the table at which he had worked. Surely some trace of his sojourn here, or, at least, the souvenir of a mania, or the indication of some habit.

At first I saw only a beautiful hotel apartment. I was shown the changes he had made here and there, the couch in the middle of the room, which he covered with brilliant rugs worked in gold.

Then I opened the door of a mirrored cabinet.

A delicious and powerful perfume blew out, like the caress of a breeze that had passed over a field of roses.

The proprietor of the hotel, who was my guide, said: "He kept his clothes in here, after perfuming them with essence of roses. This odor will never evaporate."

I inhaled, for a few seconds, this breath of flowers, inclosed in this piece of furniture, forgotten here, a captive; and it seemed, in truth, as if I had found something of Wagner in this perfume which he loved—a little of his personality, of his desires, of his soul, in this mere trifle, of the secret and beloved habits which are the making of the intimate life of a man.

I then went out and meandered through the town.

No one is less a Neapolitan than a Sicilian. In the lower classes one finds a Neapolitan three-fourths a jack-in-the-box. He gesticulates, bustles about, becomes excited without cause, expresses him-

self by gestures as well as by words, is always amiable, as if taking an interest in what concerns you; gracious through cunning as well as by nature, he always answers by pleasant words the most disagreeable things said to him.

But in the Sicilian one sees a great deal of the Arab. He has his sedateness of manner, combined with the liveliness of the Italian. His native pride, his love of titles, the very nature of his pride, and even his features, make him more like a Spaniard than like an Italian. But that which gives one at all times the impression of the Orient is the peculiar voice, the nasal intonation of the street criers. One hears everywhere this shrill note of the Arab, which seems to come down from the forehead to the throat, instead of, as in the north, rising from the chest to the mouth. And the drawling song, monotonous and soft, heard through the open door of a house as we pass by, is surely the same, as to rhythm and accent, as that sung by the rider clothed in white who guides travelers through the endless and bare regions of the desert.

At the theater, though, the Sicilian becomes Italian again; and it is very interesting to attend an operatic performance in Rome, Naples, or Palermo.

Every impression of the public is expressed as soon as felt. Excessively nervous, gifted with an ear as true as it is sensitive, loving music to distraction, the entire audience becomes a sort of vibrating animal, which feels but does not reason. In the space of five minutes it will applaud an actor with enthusiasm and hiss with frenzy; it stamps with joy or with rage, and if a false note escapes from the throat of the singer, a strange cry, exasperated and in a high key, bursts from every throat

at the same time. When opinions differ, the hissing and cheering are deafening. Nothing is allowed to pass unnoticed by these attentive and quivering hearers, who express every emotion, and sometimes, seized with sudden anger, roar as would a menagerie of wild animals.

Carmen just now fascinates the Sicilian people, and one hears from morning till night the famous "Toreador" air hummed in the streets.

The streets of Palermo are not remarkable in any way. They are wide and well kept in the richer sections, and resemble in the poorer ones the narrow, winding, and tortuous lanes of all Oriental towns.

The women, dressed in gowns made of bright red, blue, or yellow rags, sit chatting before their doors, watching passers-by with their brilliant black eyes shining under a forest of dark hair.

Sometimes in front of the building of the official lottery, which is in permanent use, like a religious service, and from which the State draws a large dividend, you witness a typical though comical incident.

Facing this building is a Madonna in its niche, with a lantern at its feet. A man comes out of the office, his lottery ticket in hand, puts a sou in the collection box that opens its little black cavity before the statue, and then makes the sign of the cross with the numbered ticket which he has just recommended to the Virgin, whose good graces he tries to win by this offering.

Stopping here and there before the windows of the shops, your eye is soon attracted by a strange photograph that represents an underground tunnel, full of dead bodies, grinning skeletons, oddly

clothed. One reads underneath: "Cemetery of the Capuchin Friars."

What can this be? If you ask an inhabitant of Palermo, he replies with disgust: "Don't go to see that horrible thing. It is a barbarous affair, which will disappear before long, thank goodness! Besides, no one is buried there any more."

It is difficult to obtain more detailed information, such is the horror the Sicilians have of these extraordinary catacombs.

This is, however, what I succeeded in finding out. The earth of the ground on which the convent of the Capuchin Friars is built possesses the peculiar property of hastening the decomposition of dead flesh, so that in a year there is nothing left on the bones but a dried, black skin, which clings to them, retaining sometimes the hair of the heads and cheeks.

The coffins are inclosed in small lateral vaults, each one containing eight or ten bodies, and when the year is passed the coffins are opened, from which are taken these horrible mummies, bearded and convulsed, as if howling in racking pain. Then they are hung up in one of the principal galleries, where the family can visit them from time to time. People who wished to have their bodies preserved in this manner asked for it before they died, and they will remain forever hanging under these dim vaults, like objects kept in museums, in consideration of a stipulated sum paid annually for that purpose by the existing relatives. When the latter cease to pay the bodies are buried in the usual manner.

Immediately I was possessed by a strong desire to visit this sinister collection of departed beings.

At the door of a small convent of most unpre-

tending appearance, an old Capuchin friar, clad in a brown robe, received and preceded me without a word, knowing very well what strangers come here to see.

We cross a poor chapel, and with slow steps descend a stone staircase, and, suddenly, I see before me an immense gallery, high and wide, whose walls are covered with skeletons, clothed in the strangest and most grotesque fashion. Some are hung up, side by side, others lie on five stone tables, one over the other, from the floor to the ceiling. A row of dead bodies, standing up in a solid row, is on the ground, and their heads seem about to speak. Some are covered with a hideous vegetation, which distorts the jaws and bones; others again retain their hair, others a bit of mustache, others a few hairs of their beard.

Some look upward with their empty eyes, others look down; here are some that seem to be grinning horribly, and others that are contorted as if in pain; others again seem affrighted by some supernatural apparition.

They are all clothed, these poor, hideous, and ridiculous dead, clothed by their family, who have had them taken from their coffins and placed in this appalling assembly. Nearly all have some sort of black robe, the hood of which is sometimes drawn over the head. But there are some who were dressed sumptuously; and a miserable skeleton, with a headdress consisting of a cap of Greek embroideries, and wrapped in a dressing-gown, like that of a man of wealth, lies on its back, as if sleeping a terrifying though comical sleep.

A placard, like that a blind man carries, hangs from the neck, bearing the name and the date of

death. These dates cause a shiver to go through one's very bones: 1880—1881—1882!

This, then, was a man eight years ago. It lived, laughed, spoke, ate, and drank, and was full of joy and hope. And there it is now! Before this double row of indescribable beings coffins and boxes are heaped up; some are expensive coffins in ebony, with brass ornaments and small, square glass openings. One would think they were trunks, valises, of savages, that were bought in some bazaar by those going on the voyage, as people used to say.

But other galleries open to the right and left, indefinitely lengthening out this immense subterranean cemetery.

Here are the women, who are still more grotesque than the men, for they have been dressed up in a coquettish manner. The heads seem to look at you, squeeezd into lace and beribboned bonnets, apparently as white as snow, around those black faces decayed and worn away by the strange workings of the earth. The hands, resembling the cut-up roots of a tree, peep out from the sleeves of a new robe, and the stockings that inclose the bones of the legs seem empty. Sometimes the skeleton has only shoes on, great, clumsy shoes for the poor dried-up feet.

Here are the young girls, the hideous young girls, in their white garments, with a crown of metal around the head, as the symbol of innocence. They grin so horribly you would take them for very old women. And yet they are sixteen, eighteen, twenty. It is horrible.

We then reach a gallery full of little glass coffins. These are the children. The bones, hardly formed, have not been able to resist. And one can

hardly distinguish anything, such is the distorted and fearful appearance presented by these poor little wretched beings. But you are moved to tears, for the mothers have dressed them in the last garments they wore on earth. And the parents come to see them thus.

In many instances a photograph hangs above the skeleton, showing the child as it looked when alive, and nothing is so startling as this contrast evoked by the comparison of the two, and the thoughts it evokes.

We cross a darker and lower gallery, that seems to have been reserved for the poor. In a dark corner are apparently a score of them, hung up under a transom, through which blows the outer air in fitful gusts. They are clothed in a sort of black linen, tied at the neck and feet, and they all lean over one another. They look as if they were freezing and wanted to get away, and even shouting: "Help! Help!" You might take them for the crew of some ship, still buffeted by the wind, clad in the brown and tarred oilskins worn by the sailors in a storm.

And here is the part set aside for the priests. A large gallery of honor. At first sight they seem more horrible to look at than the others, clothed in their sacred vestments—black, red, or purple. But, when you have looked at each one separately, a nervous and irresistible sarcastic smile is evoked in you at their strange and comical though sinister-looking attitudes. Here are some that look as if they were about to sing; others seem to be praying. Some one has raised their heads and crossed their arms. Some wear the biretta of an officiating priest, which, placed on the fleshless brow, now and again falls over the ear and the nose. It is the carnival

of death, rendered more ludicrous by the gilded richness of ornamentation of the sacerdotal garments.

Now and then, it is said, some of the heads roll to the ground, the cords of the neck having been gnawed by the mice. Thousands of these live in this human-flesh warehouse.

The remains of a man who died in 1882 were shown to me. A few months previous, full of life and thoroughly happy, he had come to choose his place, accompanied by a friend: "I shall be there some time," said he laughingly.

The friend comes back alone now and gazes for hours at a time at the motionless skeleton, standing erect at the place he had pointed out himself.

On certain feast days the catacombs of the Capuchin Friars are opened to the public. A drunkard once fell asleep there and woke up in the middle of the night. He called, shrieking with fright and running about on all sides in his desperate effort to escape; but no one heard him. He was found next morning, clinging so tightly to the bar of the entrance gate that he was removed with difficulty. He had become insane. Since that day a large bell has been hung near the doorway.

After this sinister visit I felt the desire to see some flowers, and I drove to the Villa Lasca, whose gardens, lying in a forest of orange trees, are filled with magnificent tropical plants.

On returning to Palermo, I saw at the left a small town about halfway up a hill, and on the summit was a ruin. This town is Monreale, and the ruin is Castellaccio, the last refuge of the Sicilian brigands, I was told.

Théodore de Banville, the master poet, wrote a treatise on French prosody which all would-be poets

ought to know by heart. One of the chapters of this excellent book is entitled: "Concerning Poetic Licenses"; and when you turn the page you read:

"There are none."

Thus, on reaching Sicily, one asks, sometimes from idle curiosity, again from anxiety: "Where are the brigands?" and every one answers you, "There are none."

There have been none for the past five or six years. Thanks to the secret complicity of certain landed proprietors, whose interests the brigands served as often as they plundered them, they managed to exist in the mountains of Sicily until the arrival of General Palavicini, who is still the commanding officer in Palermo. But this officer pursued them with such energy that the last of them disappeared in a short time.

It is true that there are often attacks by armed men, and assassinations are still frequent; but these are crimes committed by lone criminals, and not by organized bands, as formerly.

After all, Sicily is as safe a country for any traveler as England, France, Germany, or Italy, and those who are seeking adventures of the *Fra Diavolo* sort would better look elsewhere.

The truth is that a man is safe anywhere except in the large cities. If one would take the trouble to count the number of travelers held up and plundered by bandits in wild countries and those assassinated by the wandering tribes of the desert, and if we compared the accidents that happen in these places, reputed so dangerous, with those that occur in a month in London, Paris, or New York, we should find how comparatively safe these dreaded regions are.

Moral: If you are looking for cutthroats go to

Paris or London, but do not come to Sicily. In this country you can go about the highways day and night without an escort and unarmed; you will meet people exceedingly gracious to strangers, except, perhaps, those employed by the post and telegraph offices. I say this, however, only for those of Catania.

About halfway up one of the mountains which overlook Palermo is the little town called Monreale, famous for its ancient monuments; and in the vicinity of this city, perched far up in the mountains, the brigands used to conduct their operations. The practice of placing sentinels along the road that leads to it is still continued. Do they thereby wish to reassure the travelers or to scare them? I do not know.

The soldiers stationed at each turn of the road remind one of the legendary sentinel of the War Minister in France. For ten years, without any known reason, a soldier was placed on sentry duty in the corridor leading to the Minister's apartments, with instructions to keep passers-by away from the wall. Now, it happened that a new Minister, of an inquisitive turn of mind, on succeeding fifty others who had passed this functionary without paying special attention to him, asked whence came this custom.

No one could tell him, neither the Cabinet Minister nor any of his colleagues. But one of the ushers, who probably kept a careful diary, recalled that a soldier had been put there formerly because the wall had been freshly painted and the Minister's wife, not having been cautioned, ruined her gown. The paint had dried, but the sentinel remained.

And so the brigands have disappeared, but the

men are still to be seen on duty. The road winds all around the mountain, and finally reaches the city, which is peculiar, highly colored, and very unclean. The streets are made of steps, which, in turn, seem to be made up of pointed rocks, more like stone teeth. The heads of the men are bound in red handkerchiefs, after the Spanish fashion.

Here is the Cathedral, a great monument, more than three hundred feet long, which resembles the shape of a Maltese cross, with three apses and three naves, separated by eighteen columns of Oriental granite, resting on a base of white marble and a pedestal of gray marble. The portal, which is really admirable, serves the purpose of a frame for two magnificent bronze doors, made by "Bonannus, *civis* Pisanus."

The interior of this building displays, in the way of decorations of mosaic with gold background, the most complete, the richest, and the most startling work of the kind ever seen.

These mosaics, the largest in Sicily, cover the walls entirely—a surface six thousand four hundred meters. Just picture in your mind these immense and superb decorations, which represent, throughout the whole church, the mythical stories of the Old Testament, of the Messiah, and of the Apostles. On a golden sky, which shows a wide horizon round the naves, you can see, larger than life-size, the prophets announcing the coming of the Redeemer; then, Christ and those who lived in His time.

Back of the choir an immense figure of Jesus, whose features resemble those of Francis I, towers over the whole church, seeming to fill it entirely, so large and impressive is this strange picture.

It is to be regretted that the ceiling, destroyed

by a fire, should have been redecorated in the crudest manner. The loud tones of the gilding and coloring are very displeasing to the eye.

Quite close to the Cathedral we enter the old cloister of the Benedictines. Let those who have a liking for cloisters go and walk through this one, and they will immediately forget almost entirely any others they have ever seen before.

How could one help adoring these cloisters, so quiet, secluded, and cool, invented, it seems, to inspire the thought that flows freely from the lips, deep and clear in its nature, while one walks slowly under these long, melancholic arcades?

How especially do they seem to have been made to engender day-dreams, these stone alleys, with small columns, inclosing a garden, which rests the eye without causing it to wander, without diverting one's attention.

But the cloisters in our countries often have an aspect too strictly monastic, too sad, even the most beautiful, like that at Saint Wandrille, in Normandy. They cause a tightening of the heart and sadden the soul.

Let any one visit the melancholy cloister of the Chartreuse in the province of Verne, among the wild mountains of the Maures. It strikes a chill to one's marrow.

The wonderful cloister of Monreale, on the contrary, gives you such a charming sensation that you would fain remain in it for an indefinite length of time. It is very large, square, of a pretty and delicate elegance; no one that has not seen it can even understand the harmony of a colonnade. The exquisite proportions, the incredible slenderness of all these slight columns, as they stand two by two, each

pair different, some in mosaics and others plain—these covered with sculptures of peerless delicacy and those ornamented with a simple design in stone, which climbs up and around, like creeping ivy—astonish the gaze, charm it, giving birth to that artistic delight which one feels in the presence of perfect taste.

And, like these pretty little columns, the capitals are also of a charmingly varied design. And one is astonished at the very rare combination of the admirable effect of the whole and the perfection of every detail.

One cannot view this masterpiece of artistic beauty without recalling the verses of Victor Hugo on the Greek artist who could put

> "Something as beautiful as the human smile,
> On the profile of the Propylæa."

This beautiful walk is inclosed between very high and very old walls, with pointed arcades; it is now all that is left of the convent.

Sicily is the birthplace, the true and only country, of colonnades. The interior courts of the old palaces and houses of Palermo contain some that are beautiful, which would be renowned anywhere, but particularly so in this island so rich in monuments.

The little cloister of the Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, one of the oldest churches in Normandy, which is of Oriental character, though less remarkable than that of Monreale, is still superior to anything of the kind with which I am familiar.

On leaving the convent one enters the garden where one can look down upon the whole valley full of orange blossoms. An incessant breeze rises from

this perfumed forest, a breeze that enraptures the mind and the body. The uncertain and poetical craving that forever haunts the soul, prowling about, maddening and unattainable, here seems on the point of being realized. This odor surrounds one, mingling the refined sensation of perfumes with the artistic joys of the mind, throws you for a few seconds into a well-being of mind and body that is almost happiness.

Upon raising my eyes toward the high mountain towering over the city, I perceive on its summit the ruin I had noticed the day before. I learn upon inquiry that that château had been the last repair of the Sicilian brigands. Even to-day, very few people ever go up to this ancient castle, called Castellaccio. The path, on a high hill difficult of access, is hardly known. But we are bent upon going there. One of the gentlemen of Palermo, who is doing the honors of his country, insists upon giving us a guide. Unable to find a guide sure of his way, he applied, unknown to us, to the chief of police, and in a short time a man of whose real calling we were ignorant began the ascent of the mountain with us.

But he himself hesitates, and, meeting another man, he asks him to join us; thus we have now a guide for our guide. They question every one they meet. Finally a priest advises us to go straight ahead. And we begin to climb, followed by our leaders.

The road now is almost impracticable. Rocks must be scaled, and we must use every bit of our strength to raise ourselves from one place to another. And this lasts a long while.

We finally reach the summit where the castle itself is buried in a wonderful chaos of enormous

gray stones, smooth or sharp-pointed, which surround it and spread far out on all sides.

The sight from this summit is one of the most wonderful. All round this bristling hill are deep valleys inclosed by other hills, showing toward the interior of Sicily an endless horizon of peaks and summits. Facing us is the sea; at our feet, Palermo. The city is surrounded by that forest of orange trees which has been called " the shell of gold," and this forest of black verdure spreads like a dark stain at the foot of grayish and reddish mountains, which seem burned, consumed, and gilded by the sun, so bare and yellow are they.

One of our guides has disappeared; the other follows us into the ruins. They are of a beautiful wildness and quite extensive. One sees readily that no one visits them. Everywhere the ground sounds hollow under our feet; sometimes an entrance to the subterranean passages may be seen. The man examines them with curiosity and tells us that many brigands lived there formerly. This was their safest refuge and the one most dreaded. As we are about to descend, the first guide reappears, but we decline his services, and find without difficulty a very easy path which could be used by women.

The Sicilians seem to have taken pleasure in exaggerating and multiplying stories of bandits to frighten strangers; and to-day travelers hesitate to land on this island, which is as quiet and as safe as Switzerland.

To illustrate this I give one of these adventures with these terrible malefactors, which I guarantee to be true. A very distinguished entomologist of Palermo, M. Ragusa, discovered a coleoptera which

for a long time had been confounded with the *Polyphylla Olivieri.* Now, a German scientist, M. Kraatz, recognizing that it belonged to an entirely distinct species, desired to possess some specimens of it, and wrote to one of his Sicilian friends, M. di Stephani, who in his turn addressed himself to M. Giuseppe Miraglia, to beg him to capture for him some of these insects. But they had disappeared from that part of the country. Just at this time M. Lombardo Martorana, of Trapani, announced to M. di Stephani that he had just got more than fifteen polyphylla.

M. di Stephani hastened to inform M. Miraglia in the following letter:

"My Dear Joseph: The *Polyphylla Olivieri,* having had warning of your murderous intentions, has taken another route, and has found a refuge on the coast of Trapani, where my friend Lombardo has already captured more than fifteen individuals."

Now the adventure takes on the tragi-comic character of an epic.

At this time the neighborhood of Trapani was infested, it seems, by a brigand named Lombardo. Now, M. Miraglia had thrown his friend's letter into the wastebasket. A servant emptied the basket in the street; then the street-cleaner passed by and carried out to the dump-heap the refuse that he had gathered. A peasant crossing that part of the country saw a pretty bit of blue paper, only slightly rumpled, picked it up and put it in his pocket, partly through precaution and partly through an instinctive desire to turn it, some way or other, into money.

Several months passed, then this man, having been called to a questorship, threw away the letter. A policeman picked it up and presented it to a judge,

who immediately fell upon these words: "Murderous intentions . . . taken another route . . . found refuge . . . captured . . . Lombardo."

The peasant was imprisoned, questioned, almost tortured. He knew nothing. They kept him imprisoned, and a severe examination was begun. The magistrates published the suspicious letter, but as they had read "Petronilla Olivieri" instead of "Polyphylla," the entomologists took no notice of it.

Finally they deciphered the signature of M. di Stephani, who was summoned to court. His explanations were not admitted. M. Miraglia, questioned in his turn, finally cleared up the mystery.

The peasant had remained three months in prison. One of the last Sicilian brigands was thus in reality known as a species of bug, christened by men of science under the name of *Polyphylla Ragusa.*

To-day there is no less dangerous occupation than that of traveling in Sicily, either in a carriage or on horseback, or even on foot. All the more interesting excursions can be made in carriages. The first one to be undertaken is that to the Temple of Ségasta.

So many poets have sung the praises of Greece that every one thinks he knows it, and carries a mental picture of the country, such as he would like it to be, or as it looks in his dreams.

Sicily has realized my dream, and when I think of this land, so artistic in everything, I picture to my mind tall mountains, with soft classical outlines, and on their summits those severe-looking temples, somewhat massive, perhaps, but admirably majestic, which one meets everywhere in that island.

Every one has seen Pæstum and admired the three superb ruins scattered on this bare plain, bounded by the sea in the distance and inclosed on the other side by a large circle of bluish hills. But if the Temple of Neptune is in better condition and in purer style (so it is said) than the temples of Sicily, these are placed in such unexpected marvelous landscapes that words cannot render the impression they make on the mind.

On leaving Palermo, you first reach the extensive forest, known as "the Shell of Gold," and then a railway follows a shore of reddish mountains and rocks. The road finally leads toward the interior of the island, and we leave the train at the station of Alcamo-Calatafimi.

Then we go through a country that waves here and there like the swell of a motionless sea. There are no forests, few trees, but plenty of vines and cultivated fields; and the road lies through two uninterrupted rows of blossoming aloes. They look as if, according to certain instructions, they had all grown to the same height, forming the thick and strange column sung by so many poets. You can see, far in the distance, a multitude of these warlike plants, which are thick and sharp-pointed, carrying with them, as it were, the weapons and banner of battle.

After about two hours' traveling you suddenly perceive two high mountains, joined by an easy path, shaped like a crescent, which rises between their summits; and in the middle of this crescent is the profile of a Greek temple, one of those impressive and beautiful monuments that a bygone artistic nation erected to its human gods.

You must go around one of these hills by a wind-

ing road, and then you can see the temple once more, but this time you see it in full. From here it looks as if it were leaning on the mountain itself, from which it is really separated by a deep ravine; but the mountains spread all around it as if to shelter it. It stands out distinctly, with its thirty-six Doric columns against the green draperies, which form a background for this enormous monument, standing alone in this solitary, limitless country.

You feel, on seeing this magnificent landscape, that nothing but a Greek temple could be erected here, and only here would it be in harmony with its surroundings. This Temple of Ségesta was placed at the foot of the mountain by a man of genius, who appears to have been inspired as to the exact position it should occupy. It gives life to the wide landscape; it fills it with animation and makes it divinely beautiful.

On the mountain top, whose base we followed to reach the temple, we find the ruins of the theater.

When you travel in a country that the Greeks have colonized it is only necessary to find their theaters to get the finest points of view. That of Ségesta, on the crest of a mountain, is at the center of an amphitheater of small mountains, whose circumference is one hundred and fifty to two hundred kilometers. You discover a few more summits behind these, and through a wide valley facing us we perceive the sea, which is a deep blue in the midst of all this green.

When you have seen Ségesta you can go to see Sélinonte, an immense pile of columns that have fallen in a row, side by side, like dead soldiers, or else in a crumpled heap. The ruins of these giant temples, the greatest in Europe, fill a large plain

and also cover a small hill beyond that. They follow the beach of light-colored sand, where are moored a few fishing smacks, without any place in sight that fishermen might inhabit. This shapeless heap of stones, however, can interest only archæologists or poetical souls affected by all traces of the past.

But Girgenti, the ancient Agrigentum, placed like Sélinonte on the southern coast of Sicily, offers the most extraordinary collection of temples that it can be given any one to see.

At the side of a long, stony, barren hill, of a reddish tint, without a blade of grass or a shrub, and overlooking the sea, the beach, the seaport, three magnificent stone temples are silhouetted from below against the blue of a southern sky.

They appear to stand in the air unsupported, in the middle of a magnificent though desolate landscape. Everything around them is dead, that is, dry and yellow. The sun has burned and destroyed the earth. Is it the sun, after all, that has bleached the soil in this manner, or the deep fire that forever burns in the veins of this volcanic island? For all around Girgenti is stretched the peculiar country of the sulphur mines. Everything in the vicinity is sulphurous—the earth, the stones, the sand.

The temples, eternal abodes of the gods, dead like their human brothers, remain on their wild hills, with only a distance of half a kilometer between them.

The first is that of the Lacinian Juno, which contained, it is said, the famous painting of Juno by Zeuxis, who had for models the five most beautiful girls of Acragas.

Then the Temple of Concord, one of the temples

of antiquity still in the best state of preservation, which was used as a church in the Middle Ages.

Farther away are the remains of the Temple of Hercules; and last, the Temple of Jupiter, praised by Polybius and described by Diodorus, constructed in the fifth century and containing thirty-eight half columns, eighteen feet in circumference. A man can stand erect in each fluting.

Seated on the roadside, which runs along the foot of this wonderful coast, one remembers, before these admirable mementos, the most artistic of all nations. It seems as if the whole of Olympus were before us, the Olympus of Homer and the Greek poets, the Olympus of charming, carnal gods, who were of the same clay and as passionate as we are, who impersonated, in a poetical manner, the tender love of our hearts, the dream of our souls, and all the instincts of our senses.

Antiquity itself rears its head against this ancient sky. A powerful and strange feeling comes over us, a desire to kneel before the august remains left here by the masters of our masters.

There is certainly something divine about this Sicilian land; for, if we find these last abodes of Juno, Jupiter, Mercury, or Hercules, we also meet the most remarkable Christian churches in the world. The remembrance of the cathedrals of Cefalu or Monreale, and of the Palestine Chapel, that marvel of marvels, remains even deeper and more powerful than that of the Greek monuments.

At the end of the hill of the Temples of Girgenti begins a most extraordinary country, which might be the Kingdom of Satan; for if, as it was believed in ancient times, the devil inhabited a vast subterranean region, filled with melting sulphur, where he

boiled the souls of the damned, then without a doubt it was in Sicily that he elected to have his mysterious abode. Sicily supplies almost the whole world with sulphur. Thousands of mines may be found in this island of fire.

But first, a few kilometers from the town, we came across a little strange-looking hillock, called Maccaluba, which is composed of clay and limestone and covered with small cones two or three feet high. You might take them for blisters, some terribly monstrous disease of nature, for they emit a warm mud as if the soil were suppurating; and sometimes they hurl stones to a considerable height, roaring and throwing out foul gases. They growl, as it were, these horrible leprous little volcanoes, these running sores.

We next wish to visit the sulphur mines. We then go into the mountains. Before us stretches a desolate country, a wretched soil, which appears to have been cursed by nature. The valleys are gray, yellow, stony, and sinister, bearing the stigma of a divine reprobation in their solitude and poverty, which, nevertheless, possess a certain grandeur.

Finally we reach a few miserable-looking buildings. Here are the mines of which there are more than a thousand in the neighborhood it is said.

On entering the inclosure of one of them you notice, at first, a singular hillock, grayish and smoky. It is a real sulphur well, made by human hands.

But on the other side of the island, a few hours from the coast, is one of the most wonderful phenomena that can be seen anywhere. I mean the island of the volcano, that fantastic flower of sulphur, which blooms in mid-ocean.

You leave Messina at midnight, in a wretched

steamboat, where the first-class passengers are unable to find a seat, even on deck.

Not the slightest breeze; the boat alone disturbs the quiet of the night.

The shores of Sicily and those of Calabria exhale such a powerful odor of blossoming orange trees that the whole channel is perfumed by it, as if it were a lady's bower. The city is soon left behind, and you pass between Scylla and Charybdis; the mountains become lower, while above them appears the flat and snowy summit of Mount Etna, silvery in the light of the full moon.

Then we fall asleep for a while, lulled by the monotonous noise of the ship's paddles, and we awaken to find that it is almost daybreak.

Now we are opposite the Lipari Islands. The first on the left and the last on the right emit a thick white smoke. They are the Volcano and the Stromboli, and between them may be seen the Lipari, the Filicuri, the Alicuri, and a few other low and small islands.

Lipari, where we land first, is composed of a few white houses, at the foot of a green hill. The place is fruitful and charming, surrounded by beautiful rocks of a peculiar shape and of a deep subdued red. There are mineral waters, which made it popular in bygone days.

Lipari ends on the north side in an unusually white mountain, which might be mistaken for one of snow were it in a colder country. It is here that the world supplies itself with pumice stone.

I hired a boat with four oarsmen, to go and see the island of the Volcano.

The reflection of the red rocks in the blue sea is a strange sight. A little strait is passed that

divides the two islands. The crest of the island of the Volcano rises above the waves like a submerged crater.

It is a small uncultivated island, whose peak is about twelve hundred feet high, and it has a surface of twenty square kilometers. We go around another islet, the Volcanello, which rose abruptly from the sea about the year 200 B. C., and is united to the larger island by a narrow strip of land, overflowed by the waves on stormy days.

Now we are in a deep bay facing the smoking crater. At its foot is a house occupied by an Englishman, who is sleeping, they say, otherwise I never could climb this volcano, which is exploited by this manufacturer; but he is sleeping, and so I can cross a large kitchen garden, then vineyards belonging to him, and again a forest of blossoming gorse. One would say it was an immense yellow scarf, draped about the sharp cone, whose top is also of the same color, blinding under the glare of the sun. I ascend by a narrow path, steep and slippery, winding through cinders and lava. As in Switzerland, we sometimes see a stream falling from the top of a mountain, so here we find an unruffled cascade of sulphur that has poured through the crevices. It is like a stream of congealed light, the fluid rays of the sun.

I finally reached the crest, where a large platform surrounds the crater. The earth quakes, and in front of me, from an opening the size of a man's head, issues with great force an immense jet of flame and steam, while from the edge of this hole pours the liquid sulphur, gilded by the fire. It forms immediately into a yellow lake around this fantastical spring. Farther away, other crevices throw out

white vapors, which rise heavily in the blue atmosphere.

I advance with a certain sensation of fear on the hot cinders and lava, as far as the edge of the crater, and the most wonderful sight greets my eye.

Deep in this immense well, called the Fossa, which is one thousand feet wide and six hundred deep, from a dozen giant fissures and round holes pour fire, smoke, and sulphur, with a noise like that of immense boilers. You can go down the sides of this abyss and walk along the edge of the volcano. Everything around, under my feet and above me, is yellow, blinding, maddening yellow. Everything is yellow: the soil, the high walls, and the sky itself. The yellow sun pours its brilliant light into this raging whirlpool, whose heat burns like a scald. And the yellow liquid boils, and you see dazzling crystals and strange acids on the edge of this furnace.

The Englishman whom we left sleeping at the foot of the hill makes a business of gathering, storing, and selling these acids and liquids—in fact, everything the crater throws up; for they say all this is worth money, a great deal of money, too.

I come back slowly, out of breath, panting, suffocated by the unendurable fumes of the volcano; and on climbing back to the summit I saw all the Lipari Islands scattered about on the waves. Far away rises Stromboli, while behind me gigantic Etna appears to look down on its children and grandchildren.

On my way back from on board the boat, I had discovered an island behind Lipari. The boatman said it was Salina. That is the place where Malmsey wine is made.

I wanted to drink some of it. It is like a syrup of sulphur. It is the wine of volcanoes—thick, sweet, golden, and so full of sulphur that the taste remains for hours afterward. It ought to be called the devil's drink.

The wretched ship that brought me takes me back. At first I look at Stromboli, a round, high mountain, whose summit smokes and whose base is in deep water. It is only a cone emerging from the water. Clinging to its sides I notice a few houses, which look like seashells. Then my eyes turn toward Sicily, which we are approaching, and I cannot see anything but Mount Etna, which seems to crush it down with its tremendous weight, rearing its snow-covered head above all the other mountains on the island. They look like dwarfs, these other large mountains below it; and Etna itself seems of low stature, such is its great massiveness. To realize thoroughly the size of this weighty giant, one must see it from far out at sea.

To the left are the hilly shores of Calabria and the Strait of Messina, which resembles the mouth of a gulf. We pass through it, and presently enter the harbor. The city is without great interest, and we leave the same day for Catania. We go to Taormina.

Should a person who had only a day to spend in Sicily ask me what to see, I should say, Taormina.

It is only a landscape, but a landscape where you find everything that can possibly appeal to the eye, the mind, and the imagination.

The village rests on a tall mountain, as if it had rolled down from the summit; but we do not stop in it, although it contains some pretty relics of the past, but go to the Greek temple to see the sunset.

I have already said, speaking of the theater of Ségesta, that the Greeks, incomparable decorators as they were, knew how to choose the one and only place where theaters, those houses built for the pleasures of our artistic senses, should be erected.

The one of Taormina is so marvelously placed that there cannot be another spot in the world that can compare with it. When one enters it, goes over the stage, the only one that has come down to us in a good state of preservation, one climbs the tumble-down and grass-grown steps that spectators formerly occupied, where thirty-five thousand people could be seated, and gazes about in astonishment.

You can see the ruins, melancholy though beautiful, the charming columns still white and crowned with their capitals; the sea below you stretching out indefinitely, and the beach with its enormous rocks, its golden sand, and its small white villages. And, towering above all this, to the right, filling half the sky with its huge mass, is Mount Etna, smoking and covered with snow.

Where can you find the races who could accomplish such things? Where are the men who could erect, for the pleasure of the masses, edifices like this?

Now we resume our journey toward Catania, whence I wish to climb the volcano.

The monster is about thirty or forty kilometers distant. This makes us appreciate how enormous it must really be. From its black, cavernous mouth it has thrown up, from time to time, a burning flow of bitumen, which, running down its gentle or rapid slopes, has filled valleys, buried villages, drowned men as a river would, and finally has ended at the

sea, driving it back with great force. They have formed cliffs, mountains, and ravines, these slow waves so clammy and red; and as their color darkened when they were stiffening they have caused the soil all around this immense volcano to become blackened, full of crevices, dents, unseemly designs, caused by the vagaries of eruptions and the whimsical humor of the hot lava.

Sometimes Mount Etna remains undisturbed for centuries at a time, only blowing into the sky its ponderous smoke. Then, under the influence of the sun and rain, the lavas of the ancient volcano overflow, become pulverized, forming a sort of cinder, a black and sandy soil, in which grow olive, orange, and citron trees, pomegranates, and vines.

Nothing is so green, so pretty, or even so charming as Aci-Reale, in the midst of a forest of orange and olive trees. But, every now and then, you find a large black stretch on which time has had no effect, which has retained all its fantastic forms, extraordinary shapes that look like animals with their twisted limbs intertwined.

We reached Catania, a large and fine city built entirely on lava, and from the windows of the Grand Hotel we could see the summit of Mount Etna.

Thanks to the kindness of M. Ragusa, a member of the Alpine Club, we were enabled to make the ascent of the volcano with great facility, in spite of the fact that it is a fatiguing climb, although not dangerous.

A carriage drove us first to Nicolisi, through fields and gardens full of trees grown in the pulverized lava. Now and then we encountered deep ruts in this land, and everywhere the ground was very black.

Then, after three hours' driving and up-hill climbing, we reached the last village at the foot of Mount Etna, called Nicolisi, which is two thousand one hundred feet high, though only fourteen kilometers from Catania.

We now left the carriage and resumed our journey with guides and mules. We wore woolen stockings and gloves.

All about us now were vines that had been planted in lava. Some were young, others old. We then crossed the enormous stratum of 1882, and were astonished at the sight of the immense river, so black and motionless, a bubbling and petrified stream, which poured down from the very top of the smoking crater, fully twenty kilometers away. It had followed valleys, rounded peaks, and crossed plains, this river, and here it was now before us, checked in its progress, as its source of fire had become exhausted.

We kept on climbing, leaving on our right the Mounts Rossi, and were constantly discovering new mountains, which the guides called the sons of Mount Etna, and which have sprouted up near the monster, that carries, as it were, a necklace of volcanoes. They number as many as three hundred and fifty, these black offspring of this giant parent, and many of them are as high as Vesuvius.

We finally reached La Casa del Bosco, a kind of hut inhabited by five or six woodcutters. The guide declared it was impossible to go farther in the windstorm that had just arisen, and asked for a night's hospitality. The shed itself trembled under the blasts of the hurricane, and the wind blew furiously through the loose tiles of the roof.

Daylight came and the wind had died out. All

about us now was a land full of valleys, whose soil was black. It climbed gently toward the region of snow which glittered at the foot of the last cone, nine hundred feet high.

Now we struck the first snow level. We avoided it by a turn in the road. But another followed it very soon, which we had to cross. The mules hesitated, tested the ground with their hoofs, careful of their advance. All of a sudden I felt as if I were sinking into the earth. The two front legs of my mount broke through the crust on which he was treading, and were buried in the ground up to his breast. The unfortunate beast struggled affrighted, rising only to sink in deeper, and fall in with all four feet through the ice.

The other mules were in the same position. We had to dismount, calm, help, and even drag the poor beasts. Every minute they fell and plunged in this white and cold mass, in which even our feet sank at times up to our knees. Between these snow passes, which filled up the valleys, we found again great fields of lava, looking like stretches of black velvet, glittering in the sun with the same brilliancy as the snow. This was the deserted region, the dead region, which seemed in mourning, either all white or all black, blinding and horrible, though superb—a sight never to be forgotten.

After four hours' walking and toiling we reached the Casa Inglese, a small stone house which was surrounded with ice and was almost buried in the snow at the foot of the last cone, that rises behind it, in a shroud of smoke.

It took us about an hour to climb the nine hundred feet which separated us from the crater. For some time sulphurous and suffocating vapors had

been floating about. We had noticed to the right, and again to the left, huge jets of steam bursting from crevices in the soil, and our hands had felt the scorching heat of large stones. At last we reached a narrow platform. Before us a dense cloud rose slowly, like a white curtain coming out of the earth. We advanced with covered nostrils and mouth, so as not to be suffocated by the sulphur fumes, and suddenly at our feet opened an enormous and fearful abyss, about three miles in circumference. You could hardly make out, through the stifling vapor, the other side of this huge hole, one thousand five hundred meters wide, whose straight wall drove down to the mysterious and terrible land of fire.

Everything around us was strange. Sicily was hidden under mists that ended at the edge of the coast, concealing only the land, so that we seemed to be up in the heavens, as it were, above the seas, the clouds, so very high that the Mediterranean spread out on all sides as far as the eye could reach, looking like part of the very sky itself. The azure enveloped us on all sides. We were standing on an extraordinary mountain, that had come out of the clouds and was bathed in the sky, stretched above our heads, about our feet, everywhere.

But by degrees the shadows over the islands rose about us, inclosing very soon the immense volcano in a circle of vapors, an abyss of clouds. It was our turn to be in the bottom of an altogether white crater, from the depths of which we could see only the blue sky, far above our heads.

But on other days the spectacle is entirely different.

We awaited the rising of the sun, which appeared from behind the hills of Calabria. These threw out

their shadow on the sea, as far as the foot of Mount Etna, whose dark silhouette covered Sicily with its immense triangle, disappearing as the sun ascended in the sky. There then came to light before us a panorama four hundred kilometers in diameter and one thousand three hundred in circumference, with Italy at the north and the Lipari Islands also, whose two volcanoes looked as if they were saluting their sire, while toward the south, barely visible, we saw Malta. In the harbors of Sicily the ships had the appearance of insects on the sea.

Alexandre Dumas *père* has given an excellent and very enthusiastic description of this spectacle.

After returning to Catania we left next day for Syracuse.

This is the city with which one ought to wind up an excursion in Sicily. It was as illustrious at one time as any of the larger towns; its tyrants rendered their reigns as celebrated as that of Nero; it produces a wine which poets have made famous; it has at the head of the bay it overlooks a very small river, the Anapo, where grows the papyrus, the secret guardian of our thoughts; and it holds within its walls the most beautiful of Venuses.

Some people cross continents to go on a pilgrimage to a miraculous statue—as for me, I came here to worship at the shrine of the Venus of Syracuse.

It was in the album of a traveler that I saw the picture of this sublime woman. It was she, probably, who induced me to take this trip; I dreamed of her, I spoke of her incessantly, long before seeing her.

I wandered through the town, which is built on a island and separated from the land by three walls,

between which pass three arms of the sea. It is small, pretty, as it sits on the banks of the gulf, with gardens and walks that lead to the water.

Then we went to the Latomias, immense roofless excavations, which were originally stone quarries, but had become prisons, where, for eight months after the defeat of Nicias, the captured Athenians were confined, tortured by hunger and the horrible heat of these caldrons, swarming with vermin, where they lay in agony.

In one of these, the Latomia of Paradise, we noticed, way in the bottom of the grotto, a peculiar opening, called the ear of Dionysius, who it is said came to listen at the hole, to hear the groanings of his victims. There are other versions, too. Certain ingenious learned men assert that this grotto, when put in communication with this theater, was used as a subterranean hall for performances, to which it lent an echo that was prodigiously sonorous; for the slightest noises are surprisingly magnified.

The most remarkable of the Latomias is assuredly that of the Capuchins, a vast and deep garden divided by vaults, arches, and enormous rocks, and is inclosed in white cliffs.

After visiting the Catacombs, whose area covers five hundred acres, we then entered the modest hotel, which overlooks the sea, and we sat up late, idly watching the red and green lights of the ships in the harbor.

On entering the museum I saw her (the Venus) at the other end of the hall, and she was just as beautiful as I had imagined her.

She has no head, and one of her arms is missing, but never has the human form appeared to me more admirable and enticing.

It was not a poetical woman, an idealized woman, nor was it a divine or majestic woman, like the Venus de Milo, but it was a real woman, a woman such as you love, such as you desire, a woman you would fain clasp in your arms.

She had a large frame, well-developed breasts, powerful hips, and rather heavy limbs; she was a carnal Venus, whom one pictures lying down as she stands erect before one's gaze. One arm covered her breasts; with the other one she covered herself most mysteriously with an exquisitely charming gesture. The whole attitude of the body was conceived and executed to show the grace of this movement; the lines all seemed to concentrate here. This simple and natural gesture, full of modesty and of lasciviousness also, which hid and revealed at the same time, attracting and concealing, seems to define in truth the attitude of the feminine sex upon earth.

And the marble itself seems to live. One would like to touch it, so convinced one is that it would give under pressure like living flesh.

The hips, especially, are inexpressibly beautiful. The undulating line of the feminine back, which curves from the neck to the heels, unfolded itself with great charm, showing in the contour of the shoulders, in the decreasing roundness of the limbs, in the slight curve of the insteps, all the modulations of human grace.

A work of art is superior only in the case when it expresses at one and the same time a symbol and the exact reproduction of a reality.

The Venus of Syracuse is a woman, and is also a symbol of the flesh.

Before the head of the Joconda one is beset by I know not what enervating and mystical temptation

of love. There are also women living whose eyes give us that dream of unrealized and mysterious tender affections. We expect to find in them something else beyond what really does exist, because they seem to embody something of that ideal which is, perhaps, unattainable. Still we pursue it without success, now in and beyond the surprises furnished by beauty, again in the depth of glances that are only shades of blue, in the charm of smiles that come from the curve of the lips and a flash of ivory, or in the grace of an attitude born of chance and the harmony of the lines of the figure.

In this way have poets forever been tortured by the thirst of a mystical love. The natural exaltation of a truly poetical soul, exasperated by artistic excitement, compels those favored beings to conceive a kind of cloudy love, desperately tender, ecstatic in its perpetual state of hunger, as it were, sensual though not carnal, so very frail that a breath will cause it to vanish, so unrealizable and superhuman it must be. And these poets are, perhaps, the only men who never have really loved a woman, a real woman of flesh and blood, with her womanly qualities and defects, her limited and charming mind, her feminine nerves, and her disquieting femininity.

Any creature that causes a dreamy exaltation on their part is to them the symbol of a mysterious but enchanted being: the being they sing of, like true singers of illusions that they are. This living adored one is somewhat like a painted statue, the image of a god before whom people kneel. Where is that God? Who is that God? In what part of the heavens does this Unknown live, which they have all worshiped, these thoughtless ones, each and every one of them? As soon as they touch a hand respond-

ing to their pressure, then their soul takes flight in an invisible dream, far from the carnal reality.

The woman they clasp is transformed, perfected, or disfigured by their artistic poetry. It is not her lips they really kiss, but those they have dreamed of. It is not in the depths of her blue or black eyes that their feverish glances sink, but into the great unattainable unknown, the aim of all their dreams. The eye of their mistress is only the glass through which they attempt to catch a glimpse of the paradise of love.

But if some women, who happen to be both bewitching and bewildering, can give our souls this rare illusion, others again only excite in us the impetuous love from which the race is perpetuated.

The Venus of Syracuse is the personification of this powerful beauty, wholesome and simple. This admirable torso, in Parian marble, is, we are told, the Venus Callipygus, described by Athenæus and Lampridedius, which was given by Heliogabalus to the people of Syracuse.

It has no head! What difference does it make? Its symbol is only the more complete. It is the body of a woman that expresses all the real poetry of a caress.

Schopenhauer has said that nature, wishing to perpetuate the species, has made a snare of reproduction.

This marble figure, seen in Syracuse, is truly the human snare divined by the ancient artist, the woman who conceals and reveals the disquieting mystery of life.

Is this a snare? Very well, then! It attracts the lips, the touch of the hand, giving to kisses the per-

ceptible reality of white and buoyant flesh, so firm and rounded, delightful to clasp.

It is divine, not because it renders an idea, but because it is beautiful.

And one recalls, also, on beholding her, the bronze ram of Syracuse, the most beautiful piece of statuary in the museum of Palermo, which seems to be the embodiment of the whole world's animality. The powerful beast is lying down, the body rests on the legs, the head is slightly turned to the left. You would take this animal's head for that of a god, a bestial god, carnal and superb. The forehead is broad and high, the eyes are set wide apart, the nose is long, well rounded and thick, and it presents a prodigiously brutish expression. The horns, which are thrown back, fall, rounded and curved, with their sharp points parted under the thin ears, which also somewhat resemble horns. And the animal's glance impresses you with its stupid, uneasy, and hard look. On reaching this bronze we feel as if in the presence of a wild animal.

On leaving the museum I gave one more loving look toward the marble figure, a look such as we give the beloved one at parting, and I immediately embarked to go and pay my respects to the papyrus of the river Anapo, as all writers should do.

We crossed the gulf from one side to the other, and on the flat and bare shore we saw the mouth of a very small river, where the boat entered.

The current was strong and hard to pull against. Sometimes the men were obliged to row, and others to use poles, to make us glide over the water, which ran rapidly between banks covered with small, bright, yellow flowers—two banks of gold.

Here were reeds, which rustled as we touched

them, which bent and rose, and there, with their roots in water, were deep blue irises, on which fluttered innumerable dragonflies with glassy wings, pearl-like and quivering. Some of these flies were almost as large as humming-birds. Over there, now, on both the slopes that imprisoned us, grew giant thistles and blind weeds, weaving together the plants of the land and the reeds of the stream.

Beneath us, deep in the water, was a forest of tall, waving grasses which moved about, floated, and looked as if they were swimming in the current that forever tossed them about.

Then the river Anapo became separated from the ancient Cyane, its tributary, and we were still moving on between the two banks, by means of our poles. The stream wound in and out, giving delightful views, perspectives which were both blossoming and charming. An island loomed up finally, covered with strange bushes. The frail and triangular stems, eight or nine feet high, bore at the top round clusters of green threads that were long, soft, flexible like human hairs. They gave one the impression of human heads that had been turned into plants, which might have been thrown into this sacred stream by one of the pagan deities who lived here in days gone by. And this was the very ancient papyrus.

The peasants call this reed the *parruca*.

And far in the distance you may see many more, a whole forest of them. They quiver, rustle, bend in every direction; their hairy heads become entangled, and they always look as if they were speaking about unknown and mysterious things.

Is it not strange that this wonderful plant, which brought to our minds the remembrance of the dead,

which was the guardian of human gains, should have on its ancient body an enormous mane of thick and flowing hair, such as is worn by the poets of to-day?

We returned to Syracuse as the sun was about to set, and we gazed at the steamer, just arrived, which was to carry us away that very night toward Africa.

CHAPTER V

FROM ALGIERS TO TUNIS

N the wharves of Algiers, in the streets of the village of natives, on the plains of the Tell, on the mountains of the Sahel, on the sands of the Sahara, are men clothed in robes resembling those of monks; and, their heads cowled in a turban, which floats behind them, with stern features and steady glance, these men look as if they belonged to some austere religious order, spread over half the globe.

Their walk even is that of priests; their gestures, those of men who preach; their attitude is that of mystics full of contempt for the world.

We are, in fact, among men dominated by the religious idea, which effaces all else, regulates their actions, decides their conscience,

forms their hearts, governs their thoughts, is above all earthly interests, all preoccupation, all excitement.

Religion is the great source of inspiration for their actions, their souls, their qualities, and their faults. It is for her sake that they are good, brave, tender-hearted, and faithful, for they seem to be

nothing in themselves, to possess qualities which are only inspired or commended by their faith.

Let us go and see them praying in their white mosque, which we can see in the distance, at the end of the wharf of Algiers.

In the first courtyard, under an arcade of small green, blue, or red columns, men, seated or lying down, were conversing in low tones with the tranquil gravity of Orientals. Facing the entrance at the

back of a small square room, which looked like a chapel, the cadi, a Turkish judge, administered justice. Plaintiffs awaited their turn, seated on the benches; a kneeling Arab was speaking, while the magistrate sat enveloped, almost hidden, in the numerous folds of his garments and the massiveness of his turban, with only part of his face peering out, looking at the plaintiff with a stern and calm glance and listening to him. A wall, in which was set a small grated window, divided this apartment from that where the women, who are considered much less important than men, and who are not allowed the face the cadi, are awaiting their turn to make complaints through the little wicket.

The sun, which fell in showers of fire on the snow-white walls of these small buildings, similar to tombs of marabouts, and on the courtyard, where an old woman was throwing dead fish to an army of black and yellow cats, was reflected in the interior on the burnouses, the lean brown limbs and impassive faces. Only a few steps away was the school, by the side of a fountain, where the water flowed beneath a tree. Everything was here within these calm and peaceful walls—religion, justice, learning.

I entered the mosque after taking off my shoes; then I stepped over the rugs in the midst of the bright columns whose regular lines filled this quiet temple, which was deep and low. For these columns were very wide, with one side facing toward the Mecca, so that each believer, standing in front of it, would see nothing, would not be distracted, and, with eyes turned to the Holy City, become absorbed in prayer.

There were a few who knelt; others, standing up, mumbled formulas from the Koran, carefully ob-

serving instructions as to the various prescribed positions; others again, having performed their religious duties, conversed together, sitting on the ground along the walls; for the mosque is not only a place of prayer, but also one of rest, where they tarry, sometimes remaining for days at a time.

Everything is plain, bare, and white. All is peaceful and quiet in these houses of faith, so different from our churches, which are so full of animation when crowded, with the noise of the services, the moving about of assistants, the pomp of ceremonies, and the singing; and then, again, when they are empty, how sad they become, and how they oppress the heart, looking like a death-chamber, like a cold room of stone, where the Crucified One is still agonizing.

The Arabs entered at all times of the day, the poor and the rich, the ancient chief, the man of noble birth, in the silky whiteness of his shining burnous. Each one, barefooted, performed the same rites, prayed to the same God, with the same devout and simple faith, without ostentatious affection or even the slightest distraction. They remained standing at first, with head up, opened hands raised on the same level with their shoulders, in an attitude of entreaty. Then their arms fell by their side, and their heads were bent; they were before the Sovereign of the world, in an attitude of resignation. They then joined their hands across the breast. They were now captives to the will of the Master. Finally they prostrated themselves several times, very quickly and noiselessly. After sitting on their heels with hands outstretched on their knees, they bent forward to the ground, which they touched with their forehead.

This prayer is always the same and begins with the recital of the first verses of the Koran; it must be repeated five times a day by the faithful, who, before entering, have washed their face, hands, and feet.

Throughout the silent temple nothing could be heard but the murmur of the running water in the interior court, through which the light fell in the mosque. The shadow of the fig tree that grew above the fountain where they made their ablutions threw a green reflection on the plaited mats at the door.

The Mussulman women may enter as well as the men, though they seldom do. God is too far away, too high, altogether too imposing, for them. They would not dare to tell Him their troubles, confide in Him, ask of Him the help, consolation, and relief for their families, husbands, and children which the heart of all women craves for. They need an intercessor between Him who is great and their humble selves. This function is filled by the Turkish "marabout," or the priest, as we say.

It is, then, at the tomb of their saint, in the small chapel where he is buried, that we shall find the Arabian woman in prayer.

The Zaouia Abd-er-Rahman-el-Tcalbi is the most original and interesting in Algiers. The name *zaouia* is given to a small mosque joined to a *koubba* (a marabout's tomb), containing also a school and a higher course of study for the educated Mussulman.

To reach the Zaouia of Abd-er-Rahman one must cross the whole city. It is an extraordinary climb, through a labyrinth of lanes, tangled and winding between the windowless walls of Moorish houses. They almost meet at the top and the sky.

All along these narrow corridors, at the foot of the houses, men lay sleeping in tattered garments; others filled the Moorish cafés, seated on circular benches or on the ground, always with a stolid face, drinking out of very small china cups. We saw, through the open doors, the interior courts, which gave now and then a fresh breath of wind. And there was the same familiar square well, surrounded by a colonnade upholding galleries. A sound of soft and strange music escaped once in a while from these houses, from which could often be seen women emerging, two by two. They seemed to cast a sad and gloomy look, like that of prisoners, as they passed us.

They all wore a headdress, much like that with which the Virgin Mary is represented to us, made of a piece of cloth tightly bound about the head; their bodies were covered with the *haïk,* and their lower limbs were incased in the wide trousers of linen or calico, which were very narrow at the ankle, and gave them a peculiar walk, slow and awkward, full of hesitancy; and we tried to make out their features under their veils which cling very closely and brought out their most salient parts. The two bluish curves of the eyebrows, lengthened by a dash of antimony, extend far over the temples.

Suddenly I heard voices calling me. I turned and, through the open door, I perceived, on the walls, large and improper paintings, such as are sometimes found in Pompeii. The loose morals that prevailed, the joyous, disorderly crowd, crudely daring in shamelessness, even in the streets, showed the great difference between the European sense of decency and that of the Orientals.

And yet we must not forget that it is only a few

years ago since the performances of Caragissa, a kind of obscene Punch and Judy, were forbidden. Children witnessed these scenes and looked on with their big black eyes, some ignorant and others already corrupt, laughing and applauding the improbable and vile exploits, which were absolutely indescribable.

All through the upper part of this Arabian town, between the dry-goods shops, the groceries, and fruitstands of the incorruptible Mozabites—Mohammedan Puritans, whom the slightest contact with other men may contaminate and who, in such cases, upon their return home must undergo a long purification—are places where traffic in human beings is carried on, where in every tongue one is invited to enter. The Mozabite alone, seated in his little shop, with his wares carefully exposed around him, appears to see nothing, to know and understand nothing, that goes on about him.

On his right the Spanish women coo, after the fashion of doves; on his left, the Arabian women miow like cats. He looks, in the midst of them, between the impure nude pictures painted on both those houses to attract the customers, like a fakir, a seller of fruit, in a hypnotic dream.

I turned to the right by a small passage, which appeared to end at the sea, spreading out in the distance behind the point of Saint-Eugène, and I saw at the end of this tunnel, a few steps below me, a gem of a mosque, or, rather, a very small zaouia, a series of small buildings, and square, round, and pointed tombstones, ranged along a staircase winding from terrace to terrace.

The entrance was concealed by a wall which one would say was built of silvery snow, framed with

bricks of green tiles, and perforated here and there with openings through which the harbor of Algiers could be seen.

I entered. Beggars, old men, women, and children, were seated on every step, asking alms in Arabic. In the right, in a small structure, also crowned with tiles, was the first vault where, through the open door, we saw the faithful seated before the tomb. Farther down was the rounded and glittering dome of the *koubba* of the marabout Abd-er-Rahman, next to the tall and thin square minaret from which the call to prayer is made.

From the last terrace, at the entrance of the marabout, the view was delightful. Our Lady of Africa in the distance overlooked Saint-Eugène, and the sea stretched out to the horizon, where it mingled with the sky. Nearer to the right was the Arabian town, climbing from roof to roof, to the Zaouia, and farther beyond it, displaying its little houses of chalk. All about me were tombs, a cypress, a fig tree, and Moorish ornaments framing and crowning the sacred walls.

Having taken off my shoes, I entered the *koubba*. The first person I met, in a small room, was a learned Mussulman, seated on his heels, reading a manuscript, which he held on a level with his eyes. Books and parchments were spread about him on rugs. He did not so much as turn his head.

A little farther, I heard a rustling and whispering. As I drew nearer, the women, all sitting about the tomb, covered their faces quickly. They looked like enormous snow statues wherein shone bright eyes. They were at home in their saint's dwelling, which they had decorated—for God is too far away for them, too great for their humble souls.

They whispered and talked in a low voice among themselves, and some related to the marabout their anxieties, their affairs, their quarrels, and their troubles with their husbands. It was as an intimate and familiar gathering of friends gossiping around this relic.

The whole chapel was filled with their strange gifts: clocks of all sizes, which kept time, ticking the seconds and striking the hours; votive banners, hanging lamps of all descriptions, in bronze and crystal. They were so numerous that one could not see the ceiling. They swung side by side, in different sizes, as in a lamp-maker's shop. The walls were decorated with graceful tiles of charming designs, in which red and green seemed to be the predominating colors. The floor was covered with rugs, and the light came from the cupola through a group of three arched windows, one of these being above the other two.

This was not the stern-looking and bare mosque where God is alone; it was a boudoir for prayer, that had been decorated with the childish taste of uncivilized women. Very often lovers come here to see each other, to make an appointment, or to say a few words in secret. Europeans that can speak their language often become attached to these indolent and enveloped creatures, whose eyes alone can be seen.

When the marabout's masculine contingent comes in its turn to perform its devotions, it does not pay the same exclusive attention to the saint occupying this place. After bowing profoundly to the tomb, the men turn toward Mecca and worship God—for there is no other divinity but God—as they repeat in all their prayers.

CHAPTER VI

TUNIS

THE railroad passes through a beautiful country of wooded mountains before reaching Tunis. It penetrates into Tunisia by the Kronmiria, after climbing up to a height of seven hundred and four meters, where it overlooks an immense and gorgeous landscape.

Then a series of deserted hills and valleys is unrolled, where Roman cities formerly stood. There are first the remains of Thagasta, where Saint Augustine was born.

Farther on is Thubursicum Numidarum, whose ruins cover a succession of green, rounded hills. Farther still is Madarus, where Apuleius was born, toward the end of the Trajan's reign.

After many weary hours of riding we perceived in the low plain the tall arches of an aqueduct cut

away in some places and almost destroyed, which formerly extended from one mountain to the other. It was the aqueduct of Carthage, of which Flaubert speaks in his *Salammbô*. We passed a beautiful village, then followed a dazzling lake, and the walls of Tunis loomed into sight.

We finally entered the town. To get a good general view of its panorama, we were obliged to climb a neighboring hill. The Arabs compare Tunis to a burnous spread out, and this comparison is very apt. The city stretches over the plain, raised slightly by the undulations of the ground, which causes houses to project here and there, and also the domes of mosques and belfries of the minarets. It is difficult to believe that these are houses, so compact and even is this endless strip of white. Around the town are three lakes that glitter like plains of steel under the powerful Oriental sun. To the north, in the distance, the Sebkra-er-Bouan; to the west, the Sebkra-Seldjoum; to the south, Lake Bahira; then, if you go northward again, you will perceive the sea, the deep gulf, which looks like a lake in its frame of distant mountains.

On a bright, sunny day, this city lying among all these lakes, in a land inclosed by mountains, the highest of which (Zagh-ouan) is nearly always seen covered with mist in winter, is the most striking sight, without doubt, to be seen on the borders of the African Continent.

Tunis is divided into three distinct sections: the French, the Arab, the Jewish.

But Tunis is, in fact, neither French nor Arabian, it is decidedly Jewish. It is one of the rare places on the earth where the Jew seems at home, as if he were in his own country, where he is out-

wardly almost the master, where he shows a tranquil assurance, though still somewhat uncertain.

Where are we? Is this Arabian soil, or the dazzling capital of a harlequin—a very artistic harlequin, too, a friend of the painters, an inimitable colorist who has taken pleasure in dressing his people in an amazing and stunning manner. He must have passed through London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, this wonderful costumer, and returning here, full of contempt for the northern races, has dressed his subjects in these motley colors, with an unerring taste and a fancy that knew no bounds. Not only has he given their garments every original and graceful shape possible, but he has used to color them all the shades that ever have been created, blended, dreamed of, by the most fastidious painter of aquarelles.

To the Jews alone he has allowed the loud tones, forbidding, though, the too brutal clashing of these, adjusting the splendor of their costumes with a prudent daring. As for the Moors, his favorites, whether they are quiet merchants seated in their shops, active young men, or corpulent citizens walking slowly through the streets, he took pleasure in clothing them with such a variety of coloring that the eye is dazzled by them. Oh! for these, for his good Orientals, his Levantines, half Turks and half Arabs, he has blended such delicate shades, so soft, so gentle, so dim and harmonious, that to walk among them is a constant delight to the eye.

There are burnouses of shimmering cashmere, like streamers of light; there are gorgeous rags, alongside of *gebbas* of silk, long tunics that fall to the knee, and small jackets worn over a vest, with innumerable buttons all along the edges.

And all these *gebbas,* vests, jackets, and *haïks* are blended in such a manner that they show the most wonderfully delicate colorings. They are pink, azure, blue, lilac, Nile green, deep blue, leafy brown, salmon-pink, orange, faded mauve, wine-color, and slate-gray.

Frequently the narrow passageways are well-nigh obstructed by enormous creatures, whose hips and shoulders seem about to touch both walls as they advance. On their heads towers a pointed covering, often silvered or gilt, a sort of magician's bonnet, from behind which flutters a scarf. On their monstrously huge bodies, a mass of quivering flesh, they wear loose bodices of bright colors. Their misshapen calves are imprisoned in white trousers that cling to them. Their stockings seem to be inflated by fat; when in gala dress, gaiters of cloth of gold or silver are worn. They walk with mincing steps in half sandals, which they drag after them, for the foot is only half shod, and the heels strike the ground. These strange, bloated creatures are the Jewesses, the beautiful Jewesses!

As soon as they approach the marriageable age, and when the rich men begin to court them, the daughters of Israel dream of becoming stouter and stouter; for the heavier a woman is the more she is sought after, and the greater chance has she of choosing a husband of her own liking. At fourteen or fifteen they are slender of figure and marvels of beauty, refinement, and charm.

Their paleness, almost sickly in appearance, their delicately luminous complexion, their refined features, those soft features of an ancient and exhausted race, whose blood has never been rejuvenated; their dark eyes under their white fore-

heads, shadowed by their black, heavy, and thick masses of fluffy hair; and their graceful walk, as they slipped from door to door, filled the Jewish quarter of Tunis with a vision of bewitching little Salomes.

Then they begin to think of a husband. And then begins this inconceivable fattening of the body which will eventually make monsters of them. After eating every morning the little ball of herbs that stimulate the stomach, they remain motionless for the whole day, eating thick pastes which swell them to an enormous size. The breasts become inflated, the waists distended, and the hips increase proportionately, while the outline of the wrists and ankles disappears under the astonishing excess of flesh. And amateurs flock to see them, to judge, compare, and admire them, as they would in an animal show. It is this that makes them beautiful, attractive, and charming, these immensely enormous marriageable girls!

Then you see them pass by, these extraordinary beings, wearing a headdress in the shape of a sharp cone, called the *konfit,* from which hangs the bechkir, dressed in the flowing *camiza* in plain linen, or in brilliant silks, with trousers sometimes white, again richly embroidered, and with trailing slippers called *saba;* they are astonishing-looking creatures, whose faces are sometimes pretty in spite of their forms, which resemble the shape of a hippopotamus.

In the Arabian part of the town the most interesting quarter is that of the *souks,* in which are long streets arched and roofed with boards, which the sun pierces with blades of fire that seem to cut in two the people as they pass by. These are the

bazaars, winding and crossing one another, where sellers, standing or seated in the midst of their wares, in little covered shops, call loudly for buyers; others squat motionless among heaps of rags, of colored stuffs, leathers, bridles, harness, saddles, embroidered in gold and yellow, and red-beaded Turkish slippers.

Each corporation has its street, and along the galleries, separated by a thin partition, the men of the same trades are grouped together, all working with the same movements. It is impossible to describe the animation, the coloring, and liveliness of these markets, for no one could ever express in words the glare, the noise, and commotion.

One of these *souks* is of such a very peculiar character that the memory of it remains like a dream. It is the perfume shop.

In compartments so narrow that they remind one of the cells of bees, in a line from one end to the other, on both sides of a rather dark gallery, men with fair complexions, most of them quite young, are clad in light garments and seated like Buddhist idols, rigidly stiff and still in a framework which is fastened on the shoulders; this framework, forming some mystical design about the head, is fitted with tapers.

The higher ones are short, those about the shoulders are longer, and those over the arms are longer still. And still, however, these symmetric decorations vary somewhat with the different shops. The sellers, pale and motionless, seem to be like wax figures in this chapel of wax tapers. About their knees or their feet, or again within reach of their hands, are all perfumes imaginable, some inclosed in small boxes, in tiny vials, or even in little bags.

An odor of incense and aromatic plants penetrates the air from one end of the section to the other.

Some of these extracts are very expensive and are sold by drops, which they count by means of a small piece of cotton, which the seller takes from his ear and puts back there.

When night comes the whole quarter of the *souks* is closed with heavy doors at the entrance to each of these galleries, like a valuable treasure-house inclosed within another.

A French officer, having a special warrant, offered to let us see some houses of ill repute, a privilege seldom granted to strangers.

We had to be accompanied by a special guard from the police of the Bey, otherwise not even the lowest native brothel would have been open to us.

The Arabian quarter of the city of Algiers is usually full of animation at night. But Tunis is a dead town as soon as night comes on. The small narrow streets, winding and uneven, seem like the corridors of a deserted city, where a few gas jets, here and there, have been forgotten.

We wended our way for quite a long time through this labyrinth, and finally entered a Jewish house, where three women were performing the *danse du ventre*. This dance is not at all graceful, and is attractive only to amateurs, according to the perfection of the performers' technique, so to speak. Three sisters, very elaborately dressed and made up, were going through immodest contortions under the encouraging glance of their mother, an enormous ball of living fat, who wore a headdress of gilt paper and begged for the general fund of the house-

hold after each nervous crisis of her daughters. In different parts of this parlor were three opened doors, leading to rooms in which could be seen low couches. I opened a fourth door, and I saw a woman lying down who seemed to be really beautiful. They all fell upon me as I peeped in at her, mother, dancers, two negro servants, and a man who had been in hiding behind the curtain, watching his sisters' performance. It seemed she was the legitimate wife of this last-named person, and the daughter and sister-in-law of these abandoned women. To soften the effect of their rude and peremptory manner in blocking my way into the aforesaid room, they showed me the first child of this woman, a child only three or four years of age, who was already learning the *danse du ventre.*

I went away thoroughly disgusted.

After much delay and precaution, I was allowed to enter the dwelling of some of the fashionable Arabian courtesans. We had to wait at the end of the street, and were admitted only after a great deal of parleying and threatening—for if the natives knew that foreigners entered their homes, they would be abandoned, considered as disgraced and dishonored. I saw some fine girls, fairly good-looking, in wretched rooms filled with long mirrors.

We were thinking about returning to our hotel when the policeman offered to show us another place of interest, if such a word can here be used.

And we were again groping after him in never-to-be-forgotten dark lanes, lighting matches in order to see, stumbling into holes, striking the houses either with shoulder or hand, and hearing voices sometimes or sounds of music, the clamor of wild revels coming through the walls, as if from a dis-

tance, fearful in their muffled mysteriousness. We were now in the heart of this infamous district.

We stopped in front of a house which the policeman entered, saying to us, "Follow me." We did so, going down three steps into a low room, where three or four little children were asleep on rugs along the walls—they were little Arabs, the children of the household. An old woman, one of those hideous natives that are nothing but moving things that move about in ugly yellow rags, from which emerges a witchlike head, ugly and tattooed, tried to stop our advance. But the other door had been shut, and we entered another room where a few men obstructed the opening leading still farther, and all were listening in a religious silence to the harsh sounds going on within. The officer entered first, motioning the *habitués* aside, and we finally reached a long narrow room, where a great many Arabs were seated on boards on both sides of the long white wall extending from one end of the room to the other.

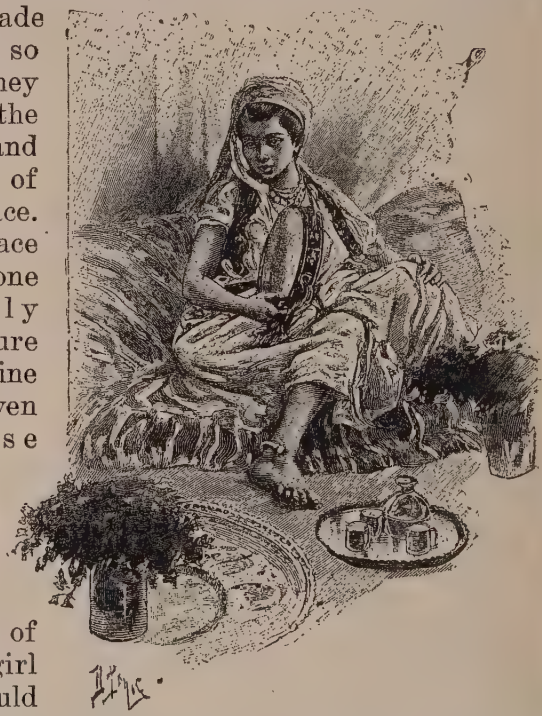
There, on a large French bedstead, which was almost as wide as the room itself, a pyramid of Arabs could be seen.

In front of them, at the foot of the bed, facing us, too, next to a small mahogany table containing glasses, bottles of beer, coffee cups, and small pewter spoons, four women were seated, singing an endless monotonous southern melody, which a few Jewish musicians accompanied on their instruments.

The women were dressed sumptuously, like fairy princesses, and one of them, a girl about fifteen years of age, was so surprisingly beautiful that her loveliness lighted up this strange place.

Her hair was held back under a scarf of gold

which went from one side to the other. Under this straight metallic band her eyes appeared large, with a staring, unfeeling look, unfathomable even—two black eyes set well apart and separated by an ideal little nose stopping just above a small baby mouth, that only opened to sing. It was an expressionless face, of a wonderful regularity of lines, primitive, but superb, made up of lines so simple that they seemed to be the natural and unique traits of this human face.



In every face one meets, one could easily alter a feature here or a line there, or even replace these with some part taken from some other person. But in the head of this young girl you never would care to change anything, so perfect and typical was her face. The smooth forehead, the nose, the cheeks, so beautifully molded and coming to a point at the chin, were framed in a perfect oval of a somewhat brown skin; the only eyes, the only nose and mouth which could possibly fit in were there also. They are

the ideal of a conception of absolute beauty with which our eyes are satisfied. Next to her was another young girl, charming also, but not so beautiful, one of those milk-white faces. On either side of these stars two other women were seated, of a low type, with short necks and prominent cheekbones, two nomad prostitutes, those wretched creatures, picked up and abandoned on the road by some tribe, where they are taken some day by a troop of " spahis " who bring them into town.

They sang, beating time on the *darbouda,* with hands reddened by henbane (a substance having the same properties as opium), while the Jewish musicians played on small guitars, tambourines, and shrill flutes.

Every one listened without saying a word, with never a laugh, and with most august and solemn countenances.

Where were we? In the temple of some barbarous religion or in a house of ill repute?

In a house of ill repute. Yes, indeed, and nothing in the world ever gave me so unexpected, vivid, and refreshing a sensation, as when I entered this long, low room, where these girls, adorned, one would say, as for a sacred festival, awaited the caprice of one of those solemn-looking men, who seem to be muttering words from the Koran in the midst of their debauchery.

One of them was pointed out to me, as he sat with his tiny cup of coffee, his eyes raised as if in deep meditation. He it was who had retained the idol, and nearly all the others were guests. He offered them refreshments and music and the sight of this beautiful girl until the time when he would ask them to retire. And they will bow to him in a very

respectful way as they file out. He was handsome, this man who showed such good taste, and also tall, with the diaphanous skin of the city Arab, which showed still clearer, owing to a black beard, shining and silky, growing somewhat thin on the cheeks.

CHAPTER VII

ON THE ROAD TO KAIRWAN

December 11th.

WE left Tunis by a beautiful road leading along a small hill, followed a lake for a short time, and then crossed a plain. The wide horizon, inclosed by mountains with misty summits, was quite bare, only spotted here and there with white villages, in which, from a distance, we could see, overlooking the indistinct mass of houses, the tall, pointed minarets and small domes of the *koubbas*. Throughout this fanatical land we see these shining little domes of *koubbas*, whether in the fertile plains of Algeria or Tunisia or as a beacon on the top of the mountains; far back in forests of cedars or pines, on the edge of deep ravines, or in thickets of mastic or cork trees; sometimes in the yellow desert with two date trees leaning over them, one on the left and one on the right, throwing on the milk-white

cupola the faint and delicate shade of their palms.

They contain, as a sacred seed, the bones of marabouts, which have impregnated the limitless soil belonging to the faith of Mahomet, and have caused to germinate from Tangiers to Timbuctoo, from Cairo to Mecca, from Tunis to Constantinople, and from Khartoum to Java, the most powerful, the most mysteriously domineering of all religions that have mastered the human conscience.

For a long time we went along at the full speed of four horses driven abreast, through endless plains planted with vines or sown with cereals just beginning to sprout.

Then, suddenly, the beautiful road, built on bridges and embankments since the French occupation, came abruptly to an end. A small bridge had broken down during the last rains, because it was too weak to resist the torrent of water coming down from the mountain. We had much difficulty in going down into the ravine, and the carriage finally ascending on the other side, we regained the highway, one of the principal arteries of Tunisia, as they say in official language. For a few kilometers we went at full speed again, until we struck another small bridge, which had also given way under pressure of the waters. Then a little farther on it was the bridge instead that remained standing; it was evidently indestructible and looked like a small triumphal arch, while on both sides of it the road had been washed away, forming an abyss about this ruin, which itself looked quite new.

Toward noontime we perceived in front of us a singular construction. It stood on the edge of the road, which had all but disappeared, and was an agglomeration of small houses joined together and

barely reaching a man's height. They were sheltered under a continuous line of roofs, some of which were a little higher than the others, giving this strange village the appearance of a series of tombs. On these roofs a few white dogs jumped about, barking at us.

This hamlet is called Gorombalia; it was founded by an Andalusian Mahometan chief, Mahomet Gorombali, who was sent into exile by Isabella the Catholic.

After a few hours' difficult traveling, we entered a large stretch of undulating ground, with the earth crevassed by ravines, and here and there lay the shining bones of some carcass, or a half-devoured carrion left there by the birds of prey or the dogs. For fifteen months not a drop of rain had fallen on this land, and half the animals died of hunger. Their skeletons were everywhere, infecting the air, and giving to these plains the look of a barren country parched by the sun and laid waste by a plague. The dogs alone were fat, having been fed on this putrefied flesh.

It is strange to think that this soil, which has been charred for two years by a pitiless sun, drowned for a month under a deluge of rain, will be toward March and April a boundless prairie with grass as high as a man's shoulder and innumerable year during the rainy season the whole of Tunisia goes through, within a few months of each other, the most frightful aridity and the most flourishing fertility.

This land is cultivated in a very peculiar manner by the Arabs. They occupy either the white villages, seen here and there, or *gourbis,* huts made of branches, or brown tents, shaped like enormous

mushrooms, hidden in dried brushwood or forests of cactus. When the last harvest has been plentiful they decide early to till the ground, but when the drought has caused them almost to starve, they wait for the first rains to risk their last seeds, or to borrow from the government the seeds, which are usually granted to them without much difficulty. Then, too, as soon as the heavy autumn showers have softened the earth they go to the cadi who holds sway over the fertile territory, or to the new European landowner, who often rents the land dearer but at least does not rob them, and who administers justice in their dealings and their debates—a justice which is not venal—and they point out the land chosen by them, which they stake and lease for one season only, and then they go ahead to till their part of the land.

And what an extraordinary sight it is! Every time we leave a dry stone region behind and we enter a fruitful section, from afar we can see the peculiar silhouettes of camels harnessed to the plows. The tall, fantastic-looking beast drags with slow steps the mean-looking implement of wood which the Arab, clothed in a simple shirt, pushes before him. Very soon the astonishing groups grow more numerous as we reach the choice sections. The camel is now replaced by cows, asses, and sometimes by women. We met one, coupled with a donkey, and she pulled as hard as the beast, while the husband pushed and urged them both on.

The Arab's furrow is not at all like the beautiful, deep, and straight furrow of the European laborer, but a kind of festoon even with the ground, which winds capriciously around the jujube trees. This lazy farmer never stops nor stoops to tear up an

obnoxious weed in his way. He avoids a roundabout turn, showing great regard for it, inclosing it within the winding circuit of his tilling, as if it were some very precious, sacred plant. Consequently, their fields are full of weeds, some of them so small that a twist of the hand would pull them up.

In this quiet indifference, this regard for the plant already grown in God's earth, the fatalist soul of the Oriental shows itself. If that weed grew there, then the Master willed it so, evidently. Why undo His work and destroy it? Why take so much trouble, why go to any effort to increase one's fatigue, no matter how slight it may be, or add to the necessary toil?

When the nomad families have sown the territory chosen by them, they go away, seeking pastures elsewhere for their herds, leaving but one family to watch the harvests.

We now reached an immense department of 140,000 hectares, called the Enfida, which belongs to the French. The buying of this piece of land, which was sold by the General Khevied-Din, former minister to the Bey, was one of the principal factors in bringing about French rule in Tunisia.

The company that owns this land has had it tilled, has planted vines and trees, established villages, and divided the land in regular sections of ten hectares each, so that the Arabs have every facility to choose and indicate their piece of ground without the danger of any error being possible.

It takes two days to cross this Tunisian province. The workmen employed all over the territory to build a French road in it are an extraordinary lot of men. There is the thick-lipped negro, with big,

white eyes and dazzling teeth, that is digging by the side of the Arab with his delicate profile; the hairy Spaniard, the native of Morocco, the Moor, the Maltese, and also the French laborer toil side by side, stranded here in this country, one knows not why or how; there are also Greeks, Turks, and all the different types from the east, and one wonders how low must be the general average of their honesty, morality, and friendliness.

We were now approaching the sea, whose blue line we could see on the horizon. At the end of a cape a city rose into sight, whose straight, glittering light appeared to run over the water to the setting sun. This was Hommamet, called Put-Put under the Roman rule. In the distance, on the plain before us, rose a circular ruin which, through a mirage-like effect, appeared gigantic. It was another Roman tomb, only thirty feet high, called Kars-el-Menara.

Night was coming rapidly upon us. The horses could only walk. Suddenly through the shadows appeared a white wall; it was the intendant's house at the modern end of the Enfida, the Bordj of Bon-Ficha, a kind of square fortress, protected by an iron gateway and walls without any openings against the attacks of the Arabs. We were expected, and Madame de Moreau, the wife of the intendant, had prepared an excellent dinner for us. We had traveled over eighty kilometers, notwithstanding the state of the bridges and roads.

December 12th.

We left at break of day. The sky at dawn was of a deep rose color. How can I ever describe it? I might say it was almost a salmon pink, were it a

little brighter. One glance, the glance of the present day, can perceive the endless scale of shades—it can distinguish the blending of colors, the different degrees, the modifications they undergo under the influence of light and shadow at certain hours of the day. But we only have, to express these thousands of subtle colorings, a few words, the plain words with which our forefathers used to describe the wonderful colors that greeted their primitive eyes.

We drew still nearer to the sea, or, rather, to a pond that opened into the sea. With my field-glass I saw flamingoes in the water, and I left the carriage to creep through the brushwood, in order to get a closer view of them.

This large pond was used formerly as a place of refuge for the ships of natives of Aphrodisium, a band of pirates who found shelter here.

We saw in the distance the ruins of this town, where Belisarius halted on his march to Carthage. A triumphal arch stands there still, also the remains of a temple of Venus and of a large fort.

On the territory of Enfida alone there are traces of seventeen Roman cities. Near the banks of the river is Hergla, which was the wealthy Aurea Cœlia of Antoninus; and if, instead of turning toward Kairwan, we continued our way in a straight line, we should see, after a three days' march, the amphitheater Ed-Djem, standing in an immense uncultivated plain; it was as large as the Coliseum in Rome, and could seat eighty thousand spectators.

In Algeria and in the Algerian Sahara all women dress in white, those of the city as well as those of the tribes. In Tunisia, on the contrary, the city women are draped from head to foot in veils of black India muslin, which gives one the impression

of strange apparitions roaming about in the streets, which are so bright in the little southern towns. And the women of the country are clothed in robes of deep blue, which are full and graceful in effect, giving them an appearance of biblical characters.

We crossed a plain where the handiwork of man may be seen everywhere, for we were nearing the center of the Enfida called Enfidaville, after bearing the name of Dar-el Bey.

In the distance we saw trees! How astonishing! They were quite tall, too, though planted only four years before, which goes to show how astonishingly productive this land is, when it is properly cultivated. The French flag could be seen waving on several of the large buildings. This was the residence of the general manager and the heart of the future city. A village had already sprung up around these principal buildings, and a mart was open every Monday, when extensive business transactions were carried on. The Arabs came in large numbers from distant points.

It is very interesting to make a study of the management of this property, where the interests of the natives have been looked after as carefully as those of the Europeans. It is a model agrarian government for those mixed countries, where customs are entirely different, calling for special foresight in making the laws.

After taking breakfast in this capital of the Enfida, we went to visit a very peculiar and curious village built on a rock, a distance of about five kilometers.

Only now and then could we see a few cactus woodlands, about the size of one of our ordinary orchards.

Here is the origin of these woodlands:

There exists in Tunisia a very interesting custom called the "right to vivify the soil," which allows Arabs to take possession of any uncultivated lands, and make them fruitful, if the proprietor is not there to oppose them. So that an Arab, perceiving a field which looks fertile, plants either olives or more often a species of cactus mistakenly called by him fig trees of Barbary, securing, by doing this, half of every crop as long as the tree lives. The other half belongs to the landowner, who has only to watch henceforth the sale of the fruit and claim his share.

The invading Arab must care for the field, fertilize it, protect it from thieves, and defend it in every way as if it really belonged to him, and each year he puts up his fruit for sale in order that the proceeds may be divided equally. Almost always, however, he manages to become the owner of the trees and pays to the real proprietor a kind of irregular rent in proportion to the value of each crop.

We finally reached the village which we had started out to visit. It was a mass of ruins and of crumbling walls where it was hard to distinguish the inhabited hovels from those which were deserted and no longer in use. The walls still standing to the north and the west were so much undermined and so threatening that we dared not venture among them: a shove would make them crumble down.

We return at night to sleep at Enfidaville.

December 13th.

First, we crossed the vineyards planted by the Franco-African Society, and then we reached limitless plains where wandered, from side to side, that

extraordinary combination consisting of a camel, a plow, and an Arab. Then the ground became arid, and with the help of a field-glass I beheld a wilderness of enormous stones standing upright in all directions, further than the eye could see. Upon closer inspection we recognized these as dolmens. This was a burial-ground, the proportions of which are beyond all conception, for they covered forty hectares. Each tomb is composed of four flat stones, three of which are standing, the fourth being placed on top, forming a roof. For many years all efforts made by the intendant to discover any kind of vault beneath these megalithic monuments remained useless. But about two years ago M. Hamy, who is in charge of the Museum of Ethnology in Paris, succeeded, after repeated researches, in discovering the entrance to these subterranean tombs, which was hidden with wonderful skill under heavy stones.

On leaving this ancient and immense burial-ground, we perceived a white house. It was El-Menzel, the residence of the manager of the southern part of Enfida, where our journey ended.

December 14th.

Next we found ourselves on a limitless moor where grew an intermittent herb, a small grayish-green plant, of which camels are very fond. We could see large herds of dromedaries feeding upon it. When we passed among them they stared at us with their big shining eyes, and gave us the impression of being in the days when the hesitating Creator threw handfuls of various types upon earth, as if to judge of the value of his doubtful creations; the shapeless animals, which He has destroyed since, little by little, allowing, however, a few primitive types

to survive on this neglected continent of Africa, where He has evidently forgotten in the sands the giraffe, the ostrich, and the dromedary.

When Sidi-Okba arrived with his riders in this sinister desert city, he struck camp in this solitude. His companions, surprised at seeing him choose this spot, advised him to go farther, but he answered:

"We must remain here, and even found a city here, for such is God's will."

They objected that there was no water to drink and neither stones nor wood with which to build.

But he silenced them with these words: "God will provide."

The next day it was announced that water had been found. The next day following this some of the Arabs who had been sent to reconnoiter announced to Sidi-Okba that they had seen forests on the slope of the neighboring mountains.

Kairwan, notwithstanding this miracle, is built entirely of bricks.

But now the plain became a marsh of yellow mud, where the horses slipped; they pulled at the carriage without making the slightest advance, and fell exhausted, sinking in the mire up to their knees, the wheels buried to the hub. The sky became clouded, and a very fine rain began to fall. Suddenly the carriage stopped, and one of the back wheels had broken down.

We had to get out and walk. We were then exposed to the rain, and the wind was beating down upon us, and we raised with each step enormous lumps of clay that stuck to our shoes, weighing us down until we were well-nigh exhausted.

After tramping in this exhausting manner for a kilometer or more, we saw through the fog, quite

a distance ahead of us, a slender, tapering tower, which was scarcely visible and whose summit was lost in a cloud, being almost of the same colorless tint. It was a vague and startling apparition, which, as we gradually approached it, took on the form of a minaret, the only thing that could be distinguished in this misty weather.

Then to the right appeared a monument covered with domes: it was the mosque known as the mosque of the "Barbier," and at last the city could be distinguished, though it was still an indistinct and hazy mass behind the curtain of rain.

Oh, this melancholy city lost in this desert, in this dry and desolate land! The Arabs sheltered in the sellers' shops watched as we went by through the narrow and winding streets, and when we came across a woman, she looked like a spook dressed in black or death itself, as she meandered between these walls yellowed by the rain.

We dined that night at the house of the French consul and civil comptroller, where we found a warm and charming reception, which recompensed us for our previous hardships.

December 15th.

Daylight had not yet appeared when one of my companions awoke me. The streets were already filled, for Orientals rise before the sun, and we saw between the houses a beautiful, clear sky that gave promises of heat and light.

After a much invigorating Turkish bath we returned to the open air, where we were intoxicated with pleasure, as we perceived in the bright sunlight the streets of Kairwan, the sacred city, which is white like all Arabian towns, but more barbaric,

more sharply characterized, stamped with fanaticism, and more striking in its obvious poverty, its wretched though haughty nobility, than any of the other cities.

The inhabitants had just gone through a period of frightful drought, and its traces were still plainly visible. As in all the market towns of Central Africa, all sorts of things were sold in shops that looked like little boxes and certainly were no larger, and in these could be seen the merchants squatted after the Turkish fashion. There were dates from Gafso or the Sonf, gathered in large bundles of clammy paste, from which the merchant detached fragments with his fingers. And there were also vegetables, pimentos, and dough, and in the "souks," which were long, winding, covered bazaars, could be seen fabrics, rugs, saddlery embroidered in gold and silver, and an incredible number of cobblers making Turkish slippers of yellow leather.

We went toward the mosque Ijama Kebir or Sidi-Okba, whose tall minaret overlooks the city and the desert which cuts it off from the world. It appears suddenly at the turn of the road. It is a large, massive building supported by enormous buttresses, a white mass of great stateliness and inexplicably uncouth beauty. In entering it a magnificent courtyard appeared first, inclosed by a double cloister upheld by two graceful rows of Roman columns. We might have been in the interior of one of the beautiful monasteries of Italy.

The mosque itself is on the right, and receives its light through seventeen double doors, which we had opened before entering.

I only know three other religious structures in the world that have inspired in me the unexpected

and astoundingly startling emotion that I experienced before this surprising barbaric monument: Mont Saint-Michel, Saint Mark's of Venice, and the Chapel Palatine in Palermo.

These are the masterpieces, thoroughly reasoned out and admirably studied, of great architects sure of the ultimate result and effect; they were pious men, no doubt, but men who were artists before everything, inspired by the love of lines, of design, and decorative beauty, as much as, and, perhaps, more than, by the love of God. But here it was another matter. A fanatical wandering tribe, scarcely capable of constructing walls, had come upon this land covered with ruins left by its predecessors, and, gathering everything that seemed beautiful, had raised, in a moment of sublime inspiration, a monument to its God, a building composed of materials torn from the crumbling towns, but a structure as perfect and stately as the purest conceptions of the greatest hewers of stone.

Before us appeared a tremendously huge temple that looked like a sacred forest, for one hundred and eighty columns in onyx, porphyry, and marble supported the arches of seventeen naves corresponding to the seventeen doors.

The eye loses itself for a moment in this deep entanglement of slim, round pillars of an irreproachable grace, whose every shade blended and harmonized, and whose Byzantine capitals of the African and Oriental school are of rare workmanship and infinite variety. Some certainly are perfect, and the most original, perhaps, represents a palm tree twisted by the wind.

As I advanced in this divinely beautiful abode, all the columns seemed to be moving, to be forming

about me varied designs of a delightful, changeable regularity.

In our Gothic cathedrals the effect of grandeur is obtained by means of the intended disproportion between the height and the width. Here, on the contrary, the unique harmony of this temple consists in the proportion and the number of these slender shafts upholding the edifice, filling, peopling, and making it what it is, creating its charm and grandeur. Their colored multitude give an impression of limitless space, while the building not being very high conveys to the mind a feeling of weightiness. It seemed to me as vast as the world, and I felt crushed as under the power of God.

Everywhere we found remarkable details. The room of the Sultan, who entered by a special door, was built from a wooden wall carved as if by great chiselers. The pulpit, also, in panels wonderfully chiseled, produces a very beautiful effect, and the *mihrab,* which indicated the Mecca, was a beautiful niche of sculptured marble, both painted and gilded, of an exquisite decoration and style.

Facing the middle door of the mosque, the ninth to the right, as well as to the left, the minaret stood upright on the other side of the courtyard. It had a hundred and twenty-nine steps, which we climbed.

From that height Kairwan at our feet seemed a checkerboard of plaster terraces, from which sprouted in all directions the large, glittering cupolas of the mosques and *houbbas.* On all sides could be seen a yellow limitless desert, while near the walls appeared here and there the green slabs of the field of cacti. This boundless horizon was infinitely vacuous and dismal, and more penetratingly distressful than the Sahara itself.

Kairwan, they say, was much larger. They can still give the names of the districts that have disappeared.

Isolated and beyond the city limits about a kilometer stands the *zaouia,* or, rather, the mosque, of Sidi-Sahab (the Prophet's barber), that attracts, even from afar, the eye; we went to it.

This *zaouia,* different from that of Djama-Kebir, which we had just left, was in no way imposing, though it appealed to me as the most graceful, the most highly colored and coquettish of mosques, and also as the most perfect example of Arabian decorative art I had ever seen.

We entered by a staircase of antique tiles of a delightful design into a little entrance hall, paved and ornamented in the same way. A long, narrow courtyard came next, surrounded by a cloister with arches in the shape of a horseshoe, resting on Roman columns and reflecting, when the day is very bright, the dazzling brilliancy of the sun, which pours down in sheets of gold upon all these walls, covered evenly with tiles of wonderful coloring and infinite variety. The large square courtyard into which we drifted next is also entirely decorated. The light shone, glittered, and even gave a dazzling sort of polish to this immense enameled palace, where were lighted up, under the blazing Saharan sky, all the designs and colorings of Oriental pottery. Above these were inexpressibly delightful arabesques. It was upon this fairy-like courtyard that opened the door of the sanctuary containing the tomb of Sidi-Sahab, companion and barber to the Prophet, three hairs of whose beard he carried on his breast to his dying day.

This sanctuary, ornamented with regular designs

in white and black marble, in which inscriptions are traced, which was filled with thick rugs and standards, appeared to me less beautiful than the two never-to-be-forgotten courts by which we reached it.

On leaving it we crossed a third court, peopled with young men. It was a Mussulman college, a school for fanatics.

All these *zaouias*, with which the land of Islam is covered, are, as it were, the eggs of the innumerable orders and fraternities between which are divided the special devotions of the faithful.

The principal one in Kairwan (I am not speaking here of the mosques, which belong to God alone) are: the *zaouia* of Si-Mahomet-Elonani; the *zaouia* of Sidi-Abd-el-Kader-el-Djalani, the greatest and most revered saint of Islam; the *zaouia* Et-Tid-Jani; the *zaouia* Sidi-Mahomet-Ben-Aissa from Mekues, which contains tambourines, *daboukas,* swords, iron heads, and other instruments necessary to the fierce ceremonies of the Aissaouas.

These innumerable orders and brotherhoods of

Islam, which resemble the Catholic orders in many points, and which, placed under the protection of a venerated marabout, are connected with the Prophet by a chain of pious doctors called by the Arabs *Selsesat,* have increased considerably, since the beginning of the present century especially, and they form the most formidable bulwarks of the Mahometan religion against the civilization and domination of the Europeans.

Under the title of *Marabout and Khonan,* Major Rinn has enumerated and analyzed them in the most complete and erudite manner.

December 16th.

The road from Kairwan toward Susa increased the feeling of depression felt in the Sacred City.

After the former series of large cemeteries, vast fields of stone, which we had seen on our way to Kairwan, we now saw hills and mounds of all sorts of refuse, which had undoubtedly accumulated there for centuries; then began once more the marshy plain, where we often drove over the backs of tortoises, and again the moor where camels pastured. Behind us the town, the domes, the mosques, and minarets rose in that mournful solitude like a mirage of the desert, then they receded and finally disappeared.

After several hours' walking the first halt was called near a *koubba,* in a clump of olive trees. We were at Sidi-L'Hanni, and I never saw the sun make of a white cupola a more astonishing marvel of colorings. Was it white? Yes, of a blinding white! and yet the light was so strangely and curiously decomposed on this huge egg that we could perceive an enchanting blending of mysterious shades, which

seemed imaginary rather than real, so delicate, so faint, so steeped in that snowy whiteness, that we did not see them immediately; only after the first astonished, dazzled look were they revealed to us. And then we could see nothing else but these shadings, so numerous, so varied and strong, and yet almost invisible. The more you looked at them the more pronounced they became. Shadows of gold fluttered on these outlines, bathed in a dim lilac as if in a mist, which was crossed here and there by bluish rays. The motionless shadow of one of its parts was sometimes gray, or green, or yellow. Under the shelter of the cornice the wall below seemed violet: and I surmised the atmosphere must be mauve around that blinding dome, which looked to me now almost pink, yes, almost pink, for on staring at it too much the tones and shades, so bright and clear, became confused under the brilliancy of the light. And the shadow thrown on the ground, of what shade was it? Who could ever analyze, describe, or paint it? How many years will it take before, by steeping our eyes in these indescribable colorings, so novel to us who have been taught and trained to gaze at the atmosphere of Europe with its effects and reflections, we will be able to understand these, distinguish and express them so that we will be in a position to give to those who see them on canvas, where they will some day be painted by the brush of an artist, the complete rendering of their beauty as it really is?

We then found a country less barren, where olive trees grew. At Mouriddin, near a well, a beautiful girl laughed, showing her teeth, as we passed by, and a little farther on we passed by a rich merchant of Susa, returning to town, riding a donkey and fol-

lowed by a little negro boy carrying his gun. He had no doubt just been inspecting his field of olive trees and his vineyards. He was young, clothed in a green vest and a pink jacket, partly hidden under a silk burnous draped about his shoulders and hips. Seated like a woman on his donkey, which trotted along, he dangled his two legs incased in stockings of the purest white, while on his feet he kept fast two glossy heelless slippers by some mysterious means.

And the little negro boy, dressed in red, with a gun on his shoulder, ran with a wonderful agility behind his master's mount.

Here we were at Susa.

If only to see Susa, this long trip is worth making. What a beautiful wall, reaching as far as the sea, for carriages cannot enter the narrow and winding streets of this town of former times. The wall ran along the shore with its battlements and square towers, then it made a curve, followed the beach, turned once more, ascended and continued in circular manner without once changing, not even for a few meters, the coquettish appearance of its Saracen bulwarks.

After going through the town, an interweaving of astonishing lanes, and as we had still another hour of daylight, we decided to go see at a distance of ten minutes from the gateway the excavations being made by the authorities on the site of the burial-ground in Hadrumentum. Large vaults have been discovered there that contained as many as twenty sepulchers, some of which bear traces of mural paintings. These researches are due to army officers, who become in time enthusiastic archæologists, and who would render invaluable help in this and

other sciences if the Administration of Fine Arts did not discourage them by vexatious ordinances.

In 1860 there came to light in this same necropolis a very curious mosaic representing the labyrinth of Crete with the Minotaur in the middle, and near the entrance a bark bringing Theseus, with Ariadne and her thread. A photograph of this mosaic was kindly offered to me, made from a drawing of Mr. Larmande, draughtsman to the government.

We returned to Susa at sunset to dine at the residence of the French Civil Manager, who is one of the most learned and most interesting raconteurs of the manners and customs of this country. From his house we could see the whole town, a cascade of square, whitewashed roofs, where black cats ran about, and sometimes a phantom rose, dressed in light or colored garments. From place to place a tall palm tree grew between the houses and spread its bouquet of green leaves over this even whiteness.

Then, when the moon had risen, all this became a silver foam rolling toward the sea, a wonderful poet's dream realized; the improbable apparition of a fantastic city from a glowing stream of light ascended to the heavens.

We wandered through the streets until a very late hour. A Moorish café attracted our attention, and we entered. It was full of men lying or seated either on the ground or on the boards, covered with rugs, around an Arabian story teller. He was a fat old man with roguish eyes, who spoke with a comical mimicry that would of itself have amused one without the aid of words. He was telling them a joke, the story of an impostor who tried to pass for a marabout, but whose identity the Iman revealed.

His simple-minded auditors were delighted, and followed with great attention a recital which was interrupted only by loud laughter.

And we stopped in a narrow street in front of a fine Oriental house, whose open door showed a long straight staircase, decorated in tiles and illuminated from top to bottom by an invisible lamp, throwing a shower and a pulverized dust of light, whose source seemed also to be a mystery. Under this inexplicable radiance each enameled step seemed to be awaiting some one, perhaps some fat old Mussulman, though it looked more as if it must be a young lover. Never did I understand the meaning of expectancy, or even dream of it, as I did before this open door and this deserted staircase. Outside, in the wall lighted by the moon, hung a large closed balcony which they call a *barmakli*. There were two darkened openings in the middle, behind the valuable chiseled ironwork of the *moncharabis*. Was she in there, watching, listening, this Arabian Juliet, whose heart beat fast and who heartily hates us? May be. But her sensual desires are not like ours, which, in our country and on a similar night, throw us in quasi-delirium of passion. On this calm and soporific soil, so captivating that the legend of the lotus-eaters was born there in the island of Djerba, the atmosphere is sweeter than anywhere else, the sun warmer, daylight clearer, but the heart does not know true love. The women are beautiful and ardent, and yet are ignorant of our tender caresses. Their simple souls have remained strangers to our sentimental emotions, and their kisses, it is said, do not inspire the dreams of true love.

A QUESTION OF DIPLOMACY

PARIS had just heard of the disaster at Sedan. A republic had been declared. All France was wavering on the brink of this madness which lasted until after the Commune. From one end of the country to the other everybody was playing soldier.

Tailors became colonels, fulfilling the duties of generals; revolvers and swords were displayed around big, peaceful stomachs wrapped in flaming red belts; little tradesmen became warriors commanding battalions of brawling volunteers, and swearing like pirates in order to give themselves some prestige.

The sole fact of handling firearms crazed these people, who up to that time had only handled scales, and made them, without any reason, dangerous to all. Innocent people were shot to prove that they knew how to kill; in forests which had never seen a Prussian, stray dogs, grazing cows and browsing horses were killed.

Each one thought himself called upon to play a great part in military affairs. The cafés of the smallest villages, full of uniformed tradesmen, looked like barracks or hospitals.

The town of Canneville was still in ignorance of the maddening news from the army and the capital; nevertheless, great excitement had prevailed for the last month, the opposing parties finding themselves face to face.

The mayor, Viscount de Varnetot, a thin, little old man, a Conservative who had recently, through ambition, gone over to the Empire, had seen a determined opponent arise in Doctor Massarel, a big, full-blooded man, leader of the Republican party of the neighborhood, a high official in the local masonic lodge, president of the Agricultural Society and of the firemen's banquet, and the organizer of the rural militia which was to save the country.

In two weeks, he had managed to gather together sixty-three volunteers, fathers of families, prudent farmers and town merchants, and every morning he would drill them in the square in front of the town-hall.

When, perchance, the mayor would come to the municipal building, Commander Massarel, girt with pistols, would pass proudly in front of his troop, his sword in his hand, and make all of them cry: "Long live the Fatherland!" And, it had been noticed that this cry excited the little Viscount, who probably saw in it a menace, a threat, as well as the odious memory of the great Revolution.

On the morning of the fifth of September, the doctor, in full uniform, his revolver on the table, was giving a consultation to an old couple, a farmer, who had been suffering from varicose veins for the last seven years and had waited until his wife had them also before he would consult the doctor, when the postman brought in the paper.

M. Massarel grew pale, suddenly rose up, and

lifting his hands to heaven in a gesture of exaltation, began to roar before the two frightened country folks:

" Long live the Republic! long live the Republic! long live the Republic! "

Then he fell back in his chair, weak from emotion.

And as the peasant began: " It started with the ants, which began to run around my legs—" Doctor Massarel exclaimed:

" Shut up! I haven't got time to bother with your nonsense. The Republic has been proclaimed, the Emperor has been taken prisoner, France is saved! Long live the Republic! "

Running to the door, he howled:

" Céleste, quick, Céleste! "

The servant, affrighted, hastened in; he was trying to talk so rapidly that he could not get the words out of his mouth:

" My boots, my sword, my cartridge-box and the Spanish dagger which is on my night-table! Hasten! "

As the obstinate peasant was continuing, taking advantage of a small lull, he said:

" I seemed to get big lumps which hurt me when I walk."

The physician, exasperated, roared:

" Shut up and get out! If you had washed your feet it would not have happened!"

Then, grabbing him by the collar, he yelled at him:

" Can't you understand that we are a republic, you brass-plated idiot! "

But professional sentiment soon calmed him, and he pushed the bewildered couple out, repeating:

"Come back to-morrow, come back to-morrow, my friends. I haven't any time to-day."

As he rigged himself out from head to foot, he was giving a series of important orders to his servant:

"Run over to Lieutenant Picart and to Second Lieutenant Pommel, and tell them that I am expecting them here immediately. Also send me Torchebeuf with his drum. Quick! quick!"

When Céleste had gone out, he sat down and thought over the situation and the difficulties which he would have to surmount.

The three men arrived together in their working clothes. The Commander, who expected to see them in uniform, felt a little shocked.

"Don't you people know anything? The Emperor has been taken prisoner, the Republic has been proclaimed. We must act. My position is delicate, I might even say dangerous."

He thought for a few minutes before his bewildered subordinates, then he pursued:

"We must act and not hesitate; minutes count as hours in times like these. All depends on the promptness of our decision. You, Picart, go to the *curé* and order him to ring the alarm-bell, in order to get together the people, to whom I am going to announce the news. You, Torchebeuf, beat the assembly throughout the whole neighborhood as far as the hamlets of Gerisaie and Salmare, in order to get together the national guard and get them to the public square under arms. You, Pommel, put your uniform on quickly, just the coat and cap. We are going to the town-hall and summon Monsieur de Varnetot to surrender his powers to me. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Now carry out those orders quickly. I will go over to your house with you, Pommel, since we are working together."

Five minutes later, the Commander and his subordinates, armed to the teeth, appeared on the square, just as the little Viscount de Varnetot, his legs encased in gaiters as for a hunting party, his gun on his shoulder, was coming down the other street at double-quick time, followed by his three green-coated guards, their knives at their sides and their guns swung over their shoulders.

While the doctor stopped, bewildered, the four men entered the town-hall and closed the door behind them.

"They have gotten ahead of us," muttered the physician, "we must now wait for reënforcements. There is nothing to do now for a while."

Lieutenant Picart now appeared on the scene.

"The priest refuses to obey," he said. "He has even locked himself in the church with the sexton and beadle."

On the other side of the square, opposite the white, tightly closed town-hall, stood the church, silent and dark, with its massive oak door studded with iron.

Then, just as the perplexed inhabitants were sticking their heads out of the windows or were coming to their front doors, the drum suddenly began to be heard, and Torchebeuf appeared, furiously beating the assembly. He crossed the square running and disappeared along the road leading to the fields.

The Commander drew his sword, and alone he advanced half way between the two buildings behind

which the enemy had intrenched itself, and, waving his sword over his head, he roared with all his might:

"Long live the Republic! Death to traitors!"

Then he returned to his officers.

The butcher, the baker and the druggist were anxiously pulling down their shades and closing shops. The grocer alone kept open.

However, the militia was arriving little by little, each man in a different uniform, but all wearing a black cap with gold braid, the cap being the principal part of the outfit. They were armed with old rusty guns, the old guns which had hung for thirty years on the kitchen wall; they looked a good deal like an army of tramps.

When he had about thirty men about him, the Commander, in a few words, outlined the situation to them. Then, turning to his staff: "Let us act," he said.

The villagers were gathering together and talking the matter over.

The Doctor quickly decided on a plan of campaign.

"Lieutenant Picart, you will advance under the windows of this town-hall and summon Monsieur de Varnetot, in the name of the Republic, to hand the keys over to me."

But the Lieutenant, a master mason, refused:

"You're a wise one, you are. I don't care to get killed, thank you. Those people in there shoot straight, you know. Do your errands yourself."

The Commander grew very red.

"I command you to go in the name of discipline!"

The Lieutenant rebelled:

"I'm not going to have my beauty spoiled without knowing why."

All the notables, gathered in a group near by, began to laugh. One of them cried:

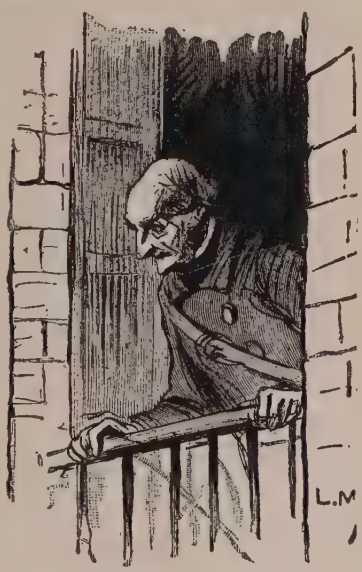
"You are right, Picart, this isn't the right time."

The doctor then muttered:

"Cowards!"

And, leaving his sword and his revolver in the hands of a soldier, he advanced slowly, his eye fastened to the windows, expecting any minute to see a gun trained on him.

When he was within a few feet of the building, the doors at both ends, leading into the two schools, opened and a flood of children escaped, boys from one side, girls from the other. For a while, they stopped in the big deserted square and played around the doctor, screeching and screaming, and making so much noise that the doctor could not be heard.



As soon as the last of the children was out of the building, the two doors were closed again.

Finally most of the youngsters left, and the Commander called in a loud voice:

"Monsieur de Varnetot!"

A window on the first floor opened and M. de Varnetot appeared.

The Commander continued:

"Monsieur, you know that great events have just taken place which have changed the entire aspect of the government. The one which you represented no longer exists. The one which I represent is taking control. In these painful, but decisive circumstances, I come, in the name of the new Republic, to ask you to turn over to me the office which you held under the last government."

M. de Varnetot answered:

"Doctor, I am the Mayor of Canneville, duly appointed, and I shall remain Mayor of Canneville, until I have been dismissed by a decree from my superiors. As mayor, I am in my place in the town-hall, and here I stay. Anyhow, just try to get me out."

He closed the window.

The Commander returned to his troop. But before giving any information, eyeing Lieutenant Picart from head to foot, he exclaimed:

"You're a great one, you are! You're a fine specimen of manhood! You're a disgrace to the army! I take your rank from you."

"I don't give a ——!"

He turned away and mingled with a group of townspeople.

Then the doctor hesitated. What could he do? Attack? But would his men obey orders? And then, did he have the right to?

An idea struck him. He ran to the telegraph office, opposite the town-hall, and he sent off three telegrams:

To the new Republican government in Paris.

To the new prefect of the Seine-Inférieure, at Rouen.

To the new Republican sub-prefect at Dieppe.

He explained the situation, pointed out the

danger which the town would run if it should remain in the hands of the Royalist mayor, offered his faithful services, asked for orders and signed, putting all his titles after his name.

Then he returned to his battalion, and, drawing ten francs from his pocket, he cried: "Here, my friends, go eat and drink; only leave me a detachment of ten men to guard against anybody's leaving the town-hall."

But ex-Lieutenant Picart, who had been talking with the watchmaker, heard him; he began to laugh, and exclaimed: "Say! If they come out, it'll give you a chance to get in. Otherwise I can see you standing out there for the rest of your life!"

The doctor did not answer, and he went to luncheon.

In the afternoon, he disposed his men about the town as though they were in immediate danger of an attack.

Several times he passed in front of the town-hall and of the church without noticing anything suspicious; the two buildings looked as though empty.

The butcher, the baker and the druggist once more opened up their stores.

Everybody was talking about the affair. If the Emperor were a prisoner, there must have been some kind of treason. They did not know exactly which one of the republics had returned to power.

Night fell.

Toward nine o'clock, the doctor, alone, noiselessly approached the entrance of the public building, persuaded that the enemy must have gone to bed; and, as he was preparing to batter down the door with a pick-axe, the deep voice of a sentry suddenly called:

"Who goes there?"

And M. Massarel retreated as fast as his legs could carry him.

Day broke without any change in the situation. Armed militia occupied the square. All the citizens had gathered around this troop awaiting developments. Even neighboring villagers contributed to the crowd in search of information.

Then the doctor, seeing that his reputation was at stake, resolved to put an end to the matter in one way or another; and he was about to take some resolution, undoubtedly an energetic one, when the door of the telegraph station opened and the little servant of the postmistress appeared, holding in her hands two papers.

At first she went to the Commander and gave him one of the despatches; then she crossed the empty square; confused at seeing the eyes of everyone on her, lowering her head and running along with a mincing step, she went and knocked softly at the door of the barricaded house, as though ignorant of the fact that those behind it were armed.

The door opened wide enough to let a man's hand stretch out and receive the message; and the young girl returned blushing, ready to cry at being thus stared at by the whole countryside.

In a clear voice, the doctor cried:

"Silence, if you please."

When the populace had quieted down, he continued proudly:

"Here is the communication which I have received from the Government."

And lifting the telegram, he read:

"Former mayor dismissed. Inform him immediately. More orders following.

"*For the Sub-prefect:*

"SAPIN, *Councilor.*"

He was triumphant; his heart was throbbing with joy and his hands were trembling; but Picart, his former subordinate, cried to him from a neighboring group:

"That's all right; but supposing the others don't come out, what good is the telegram going to do you?"

M. Massarel grew pale. He had not thought of that, if the others did not come out, he would now have to take some decisive step. It was not only his right, but his duty.

He looked anxiously at the town-hall, hoping to see the door open and his adversary give in.

The door remained closed. What could he do? The crowd was growing and closing around the militia. They were laughing.

One thought especially tortured the doctor. If he attacked, he would have to march at the head of his men; and as, with him dead, all strife would cease, it was at him and him only that M. de Varnetot and his three guards would aim. And they were good shots, very good shots, as Picart had just said. But an idea struck him and, turning to Pommel, he ordered:

"Run quickly to the druggist and ask him to lend me a towel and a stick."

The Lieutenant hastened.

He would make a flag of truce, a white flag, at the sight of which the royalist heart of the Mayor would perhaps rejoice.

Pommel returned with the cloth and a broomstick. With some twine they completed the flag, and M. Massarel, grasping it in both hands and holding it in front of him, again advanced in the direction of the town-hall. When he was opposite the door, he

once more called: "Monsieur de Varnetot!" The door suddenly opened and M. de Varnetot and his three guards appeared on the threshold.

Instinctively the doctor stepped back; then he bowed courteously to his enemy, and, choked with emotion, he announced: "I have come, Monsieur, to make you acquainted with the orders which I have received."

The nobleman, without returning the bow, answered: "I resign, Monsieur, but understand that it is neither from fear of, nor obedience to, the odious government which has usurped the power." And, emphasizing every word, he declared: "I do not wish to appear, for a single day, to serve the Republic. That's all."

Massarel, stunned, answered nothing; and M. de Varnetot walking quickly, disappeared around the corner of the square, still followed by his escort.

The doctor, puffed up with pride, returned to the crowd. As soon as he was near enough to make himself heard, he cried: "Hurrah! hurrah! Victory crowns the Republic everywhere."

There was no outburst of joy.

The Doctor continued: "We are free, you are free, independent! Be proud!"

The motionless villagers were looking at him without any signs of glory shining in their eyes.

He looked at them, indignant at their indifference, thinking of what he might well say or do in order to make an impression, to electrify this calm country.

He had an inspiration and, turning to Pommel, he ordered: "Lieutenant, go get me the bust of the ex-Emperor which is in the meeting room of the municipal council, and bring it here with a chair."

Soon the man reappeared, carrying on his right shoulder the plaster Bonaparte, and holding in his left hand a cane-seated chair.

M. Massarel went towards him, took the chair, placed the white bust on it, then, stepping back a few steps, he addressed it in a loud voice:

"Tyrant, tyrant, you have fallen down in the mud. The dying Fatherland was squirming under your oppression. Vengeful Destiny has struck you. Defeat and shame are attached to you; you fall conquered, a prisoner of the Prussians; and from the ruins of your crumbling empire, the young and glorious Republic arises, picking up your broken sword—"

He waited for applause. Not a sound greeted his listening ear. The peasants, nonplussed, kept silent; and the white, placid, well-groomed statue seemed to look at M. Massarel with its plaster smile, unforgettable and sarcastic.

Thus they stood, face to face, Napoleon on his chair, the physician standing three feet away. Anger seized the Commander. But what could he do to move this crowd and definitely to gain this victory of opinion?

He happened to carry his hand to his stomach, and he felt, under his red belt, the butt of his revolver.

Not another inspiration, not another word came to his mind. Then, he drew his weapon, stepped back a few steps and shot the former monarch.

The bullet made a little black hole, like a spot, in his forehead. No sensation was created. M. Massarel shot a second time and made a second hole, then a third time, then, without stopping, he shot off the three remaining shots. Napoleon's forehead was

blowing away in a white powder, but his eyes, nose and pointed mustache remained intact.

Then exasperated, the Doctor kicked the chair over, and placing one foot on the rest of the bust, in the position of a conqueror, he turned to the dazed public and yelled: "Thus may all traitors die!"

As no enthusiasm was, as yet, visible, as the spectators seemed to be dumb with astonishment, the Commander cried to the militia: "You may go home now." And he himself walked rapidly, almost ran, toward his house.

As soon as he appeared, the servant told him that some patients had been waiting in his office for over three hours. He hastened in. They were the same two peasants as a few days before, who had returned at daybreak, obstinate and patient.

The old man immediately began his explanation:

"It began with ants, which seemed to be crawling around my legs—"

A QUEER NIGHT IN PARIS

MAÎTRE SAVAL, notary at Vernon, was passionately fond of music. Although still young he was already bald; he was always carefully shaven, was somewhat corpulent as was suitable, and wore a gold *pince-nez* instead of spectacles. He was active, gallant and cheerful and was considered quite an artist in Vernon. He played the piano and the violin, and gave musicals where the new operas were interpreted.

He had even what is called a bit of a voice; nothing but a bit, a very little bit of a voice; but he managed it with so much taste that cries of "Bravo!" "Exquisite!" "Surprising!" "Adorable!" issued from every throat as soon as he had murmured the last note.

He subscribed to a music-publishing house in Paris, and they sent him the latest music; and from time to time he sent invitations after this fashion to the *élite* of the town:

"You are invited to be present on Monday evening at the house of M. Saval, notary, Vernon, at the first rendering of *Sais.*"

A few officers, gifted with good voices, formed

the chorus. Two or three of the vinedressers' families also sang. The notary filled the part of leader of the orchestra with so much correctness that the bandmaster of the 190th regiment of the line said to him, one day, at the Café de l'Europe:

"Monsieur Saval is a master. It is a great pity that he did not adopt the career of an artist."

When his name was mentioned in a drawing-room, there was always somebody found to declare: "He is not an amateur; he is an artist, a genuine artist."

And two or three persons repeated, in a tone of profound conviction:

"Oh! yes, a genuine artist," laying particular stress on the word "genuine."

Every time that a new work was interpreted at a big Parisian theater, M. Saval paid a visit to the capital.

Now, last year, according to his custom, he went to hear *Henri VIII.* He then took the express which arrives in Paris at 4:30 p. m., intending to return by the 12:35 a. m. train, so as not to have to sleep at a hotel. He had put on evening dress, a black coat and white tie, which he concealed under his overcoat with the collar turned up.

As soon as he set foot on the Rue d'Amsterdam, he felt himself in quite jovial mood. He said to himself:

"Decidedly the air of Paris does not resemble any other air. It has in it something indescribably stimulating, exciting, intoxicating, which fills you with a strange longing to dance about and to do many other things. As soon as I arrive here, it seems to me, all of a sudden, that I have taken a bottle of champagne. What a life one can lead in this city in the

midst of artists! Happy are the elect, the great men who make themselves a reputation in such a city! What an existence is theirs!"

And he made plans; he would have liked to know some of those celebrated men, to talk about them in Vernon, and to spend an evening with them from time to time in Paris.

But suddenly an idea struck him. He had heard allusions to little cafés in the outer boulevards at which well-known painters, men of letters, and even musicians gathered, and he proceeded to go up to Montmartre at a slow pace.

He had two hours before him. He wanted to look about him. He passed in front of taverns frequented by belated Bohemians, gazing at the different faces, seeking to discover the artists. Finally, he came to the sign of "The Dead Rat," and allured by the name he entered.

Five or six women, with their elbows resting on the marble tables, were talking in low tones about their love affairs, the quarrels of Lucie and Hortense, and the scoundrelism of Octave. They were no longer young, were too fat or too thin, tired out, used up. You could see that they were almost bald; and they drank beer like men.

M. Saval sat down at some distance from them and waited, for the hour for taking absinthe was at hand.

A tall young man soon came in and took a seat by him. The landlady called him Monsieur Romantin. The notary quivered. Was this the Romantin who had taken a medal at the last Salon?

The young man made a sign to the waiter:

"You will bring up my dinner at once, and then carry to my new studio, 15, Boulevard de Clichy,

thirty bottles of beer, and the ham I ordered this morning. We are going to have a housewarming.''

M. Saval immediately ordered dinner. Then, he took off his overcoat, so that his dress coat and his white tie could be seen. His neighbor did not seem to notice him. He had taken up a newspaper, and was reading it. M. Saval glanced sideways at him, burning with the desire to speak to him.

Two young men entered, in red vests, and peaked beards in the fashion of Henry III. They sat down opposite Romantin.

The first of the pair said:

'' Is it for this evening? ''

Romantin pressed his hand.

'' I believe you, old chap, and everyone will be there. I have Bonnat, Guillemet, Gervex, Beraud, Hébert, Duez, Clairin, and Jean-Paul Laurens. It will be a stunning affair! And women too! Wait till you see! Every actress without exception—of course I mean, you know, all those who have nothing to do this evening.''

The landlord of the establishment came across.

'' Do you often have this housewarming? ''

The painter replied:

'' I believe you, every three months, each quarter.''

M. Saval could not restrain himself any longer, and in a hesitating voice said:

'' I beg your pardon for intruding on you, Monsieur, but I heard your name pronounced, and I should be glad to know if you really are Monsieur Romantin, whose work in the last Salon I have so much admired? ''

The painter answered:

'' I am the very person, Monsieur.''

The notary then paid the artist a very well-turned compliment, showing that he was a man of culture.

The painter, gratified, thanked him politely in reply.

Then they chattered. Romantin returned to the subject of his housewarming, going into details as to the magnificence of the forthcoming entertainment.

M. Saval questioned him as to all the men he was to receive, adding:

"It would be an extraordinary piece of good fortune for a stranger to meet at one time so many celebrities assembled in the studio of an artist of your rank."

Romantin, vanquished, replied:

"If it would be agreeable to you, come."

M. Saval accepted the invitation with enthusiasm, reflecting:

"I shall have time enough to see *Henry VIII.*"

Both of them had finished their meal. The notary insisted on paying the two bills, wishing to repay his neighbor's civilities. He also paid for the drinks of the young men in red waistcoats; then he left the establishment with the painter.

They stopped in front of a very long low house, the first story having the appearance of an interminable conservatory. Six studios stood in a row with their fronts facing the boulevards.

Romantin was the first to enter, and, ascending the stairs, he opened a door, and lighted a match and then a candle.

They found themselves in an immense apartment, the furniture of which consisted of three chairs, two easels, and a few sketches standing on

the ground along the walls. M. Saval remained standing at the door somewhat astonished.

The painter remarked:

"Here you are! we've got to the spot; but everything has yet to be done."

Then, examining the high, bare apartment, its ceiling disappearing in the darkness, he said:

"We might make a great deal out of this studio."

He walked round it, surveying it with the utmost attention, then went on:

"I know someone who might easily give a helping hand. Women are incomparable for hanging drapery. But I sent her to the country for to-day in order to get her off my hands this evening. It is not that she bores me, but she is too much lacking in the ways of good society. It would be embarrassing to my guests."

He reflected for a few seconds, and then added:

"She is a good girl, but not easy to deal with. If she knew that I was holding a reception, she would tear out my eyes."

M. Saval had not even moved; he did not understand.

The artist came over to him.

"Since I have invited you, you will assist me about something."

The notary said emphatically:

"Make any use of me you please. I am at your disposal."

Romantin took off his jacket.

"Well, citizen, to work! We are first going to clean up."

He went to the back of the easel, on which there was a canvas representing a cat, and seized a very worn-out broom.

"I say! Just brush up while I look after the lighting."

M. Saval took the broom, inspected it, and then began to sweep the floor very awkwardly, raising a whirlwind of dust.

Romantin, disgusted, stopped him: "Deuce take it! you don't know how to sweep the floor! Look at me!"

And he began to roll before him a heap of grayish sweepings, as if he had done nothing else all his life. Then, he gave back the broom to the notary, who imitated him.

In five minutes, such a cloud of dust filled the studio that Romantin asked:

"Where are you? I can't see you any longer."

M. Saval, who was coughing, came near to him. The painter said:

"How would you set about making a chandelier?"

The other, surprised, asked:

"What chandelier?"

"Why, a chandelier to light the room—a chandelier with wax-candles."

The notary did not understand.

He answered: "I don't know."

The painter began to jump about, cracking his fingers.

"Well, Monseigneur, I have found out a way."

Then he went more calmly.

"Have you got five francs about you?"

M. Saval replied:

"Why, yes."

The artist said: "Well! you'll go and buy for me five francs' worth of wax-candles while I go and see the cooper."

And he pushed the notary in his evening coat into the street. At the end of five minutes, they had returned, one of them with the wax-candles and the other with the hoop of a cask. Then Romantin plunged his hand into a cupboard, and drew forth twenty empty bottles, which he fixed in the form of a crown around the hoop.

He then went down-stairs to borrow a ladder from the janitress, after having explained that he had made friends with the old woman by painting the portrait of her cat exhibited on the easel.

When he returned with the ladder, he said to M. Caval:

"Are you active?"

The other, without understanding answered:

"Why, yes."

"Well, you just climb up there, and fasten this chandelier for me to the ring of the ceiling. Then, you put a wax-candle in each bottle, and light it. I tell you I have a genius for lighting up. But off with your coat, damn it! You are just like a Jeames."

The door was opened bruskly. A woman appeared, her eyes flashing, and remained standing on the threshold.

Romantin gazed at her with a look of terror.

She waited some seconds, crossing her arms over her breast, and then in a shrill, vibrating, exasperated voice said:

"Ha! you dirty scoundrel, is this the way you leave me?"

Romantin made no reply. She went on.

"Ha! you scoundrel! You did a nice thing in packing me off to the country. You'll soon see the way I'll settle your jollification. Yes, I'm going to receive your friends."

She grew warmer.

" I'm going to slap their faces with the bottles and the wax-candles. . . ."

Romantin said in a soft tone:

" Mathilde. . . ."

But she did not pay any attention to him; she went on:

" Wait a little, my fine fellow! wait a little! "

Romantin went over to her, and tried to take her by the hands:

" Mathilde. . . ."

But she was now fairly under way; and on she went, emptying the vials of her wrath with strong words and reproaches. They flowed out of her mouth, like a stream sweeping a heap of filth along with it. The words pouring forth seemed struggling for exit. She stuttered, stammered, yelled, suddenly recovering her voice to cast forth an insult or a curse.

He seized her hands without her having noticed it. She did not seem to see anything, so taken up was she in scolding and relieving her feelings. And suddenly she began to weep. The tears flowed from her eyes, but this did not stop her complaints. But her words were uttered in a screaming, falsetto voice with tears in them and interrupted by sobs. She commenced afresh twice or three times, till she stopped as if something were choking her, and at last she ceased with a regular flood of tears.

Then he clasped her in his arms and kissed her hair, affected himself.

" Mathilde, my little Mathilde, listen. You must be reasonable. You know, if I give a supper-party to my friends, it is to thank these gentlemen for the medal I got at the Salon. I cannot receive women. You ought to understand that. It is not the same with artists as with other people."

She stammered in the midst of her tears:

"Why didn't you tell me this?"

He replied:

"It was in order not to annoy you, not to give you pain. Listen, I'm going to see you home. You will be very sensible, very nice; you will remain quietly waiting for me in bed, and I'll come back as soon as its over."

She murmured:

"Yes, but you will not begin over again?"

"No, I swear to you!"

He turned towards M. Saval, who had at last hooked on the chandelier:

"My dear friend, I am coming back in five minutes. If anyone arrives in my absence, do the honors for me, will you not?"

And he carried off Mathilde, who kept drying her eyes with her handkerchief as she went along.

Left to himself, M. Saval succeeded in putting everything around him in order. Then he lighted the wax-candles, and waited.

He waited for a quarter of an hour, half an hour, an hour. Romantin did not return. Then, suddenly there was a dreadful noise on the stairs, a song shouted out in chorus by twenty mouths and a regular march like that of a Prussian regiment. The whole house was shaken by the steady tramp of feet. The door flew open, and a motley throng appeared—men and women in file, two and two holding each other by the arm and stamping their heels on the ground to mark time, advanced into the studio like a snake uncoiling itself. They howled:

"Come, and let us all be merry,
Pretty maids and soldiers gay!"

M. Saval, thunderstruck, remained standing in

evening dress under the chandelier. The procession of revelers caught sight of him, and uttered a shout:

"A Jeames! A Jeames!"

And they began whirling round him, surrounding him with a circle of vociferations. Then they took each other by the hand and went dancing about madly.

He attempted to explain:

"Messieurs—messieurs—mesdames——"

But they did not listen to him. They whirled about, they jumped, they bawled.

At last the dancing ceased. M. Saval said:

"Gentlemen . . . ."

A tall young fellow, fair-haired and bearded to the nose, interrupted him:

"What's your name, my friend?"

The notary, quite scared, said:

"I am Monsieur Saval."

A voice exclaimed:

"You mean Baptiste."

A woman said:

"Let the poor waiter alone! You'll end by making him get angry. He's paid to attend on us, and not to be laughed at by us."

Then, M. Saval noticed that each guest had brought his own provisions. One held a bottle of wine, and the other a pie. This one had a loaf of bread, and that one a ham.

The tall, fair young fellow placed in his hands an enormous sausage, and gave orders:

"Here, go and arrange the sideboard in the corner over there. Put the bottles at the left and the provisions at the right."

Saval, getting quite distracted, exclaimed: "But, messieurs, I am a notary!"

There was a moment's silence and then a wild outburst of laughter. One suspicious gentleman asked:

"How come you to be here?"

He explained, telling about his project of going to the Opéra, his departure from Vernon, his arrival in Paris, and the way in which he had spent the evening.

They sat around him to listen to him; they greeted him with words of applause, and called him Scheherazade.

Romantin did not return. Other guests arrived. M. Saval was presented to them so that he might begin his story over again. He declined; they forced him to relate it. They seated and tied him on one of three chairs between two women who kept constantly filling his glass. He drank; he laughed; he talked; he sang too. He tried to waltz with his chair, and fell on the ground.

From that moment he forgot everything. It seemed to him, however, that they undressed him, put him to bed, and that he was nauseated.

When he awoke, it was broad daylight, and he lay stretched with his feet against a cupboard, in a strange bed.

An old woman with a broom in her hand was glaring angrily at him. At last, she said:

"Clear out, you blackguard! Clear out! What right has anyone to get drunk like this?"

He sat up in bed, feeling very ill at ease. He asked:

"Where am I?"

"Where are you, you dirty scamp? You are drunk. Take your rotten carcass out of here as quick as you can—and lose no time about it!"

He wanted to get up. He found that he was in the bed. His clothes had disappeared. He blurted out:

"Madame, I . . ."

Then he remembered. . . . What was he to do? He asked:

"Did Monsieur Romantin come back?"

The doorkeeper shouted:

"Will you take your dirty carcass out of this, so that he at any rate may not catch you here?"

M. Saval said, in a state of confusion:

"I haven't got my clothes; they have been taken away from me."

He had to wait, to explain his situation, give notice to his friends, and borrow some money to buy clothes. He did not leave Paris till evening.

And, when people talk about music to him in his beautiful drawing-room in Vernon, he declares with an air of authority that painting is a very inferior art.

THE IMPOLITE SEX

Madame de X. to Madame de L.

Étretat, Friday.

MY DEAR AUNT:—I am coming to see you without anyone knowing it. I shall be at Les Fresnes on the 2nd of September, the day before the hunting season opens, as I do not want to miss it, so that I may tease these gentlemen. You are too good, aunt, and, you will allow them, as you usually do when there are no strange guests, to come to table, under pretext of fatigue, without dressing or shaving for the occasion.

They are delighted, of course, when I am not present. But I shall be there, and will hold a review, like a general, at dinner-time; and, if I find a single one of them at all careless in dress, no matter how little, I mean to send him down to the kitchen with the servants.

The men of to-day have so little consideration for others and so little good manners that one must be always severe with them. We live indeed in an age of vulgarity. When they quarrel, they insult each other in terms worthy of 'longshoremen, and, in our

presence, they do not conduct themselves even as well as our servants. It is at the seaside that you see this most clearly. They are to be found there in battalions, and you can judge them in the lump. Oh! what coarse beings they are!

Just imagine, in a train, a gentleman who looked well, as I thought at first sight, thanks to his tailor, carefully took off his boots in order to put on a pair of old shoes! Another, an old man, who was probably some wealthy upstart (these are the most ill-bred), while sitting opposite to me, had the delicacy to place his two feet on the seat quite close to me. This is a positive fact.

At the watering-places, the vulgarity is unrestrained. I must here make one admission—that my indignation is perhaps due to the fact that I am not accustomed to associate, as a rule, with the sort of people one comes across here, for I should be less shocked by their manners if I had the opportunity of observing them oftener. In the office of the hotel, I was nearly thrown down by a young man who snatched the key over my head. Another knocked against me so violently without begging my pardon or lifting his hat, coming away from a ball at the Casino, that it gave me a pain in the chest. It is the same way with all of them. Watch them addressing ladies on the terrace; they scarcely ever bow. They merely raise their hands to their head-gear. But, indeed, as they are all more or less bald, it is the best plan.

But what exasperates and disgusts me particularly is the liberty they take of talking in public, without any kind of precaution, about the most revolting adventures. When two men are together, they relate to each other, in the broadest language and

with the most abominable comments really horrible stories without caring in the slightest degree whether a woman's ear is within reach of their voices. Yesterday, on the beach, I was compelled to leave the place where I was sitting in order not to be any longer the involuntary confidante of an obscene anecdote, told in such immodest language that I felt just as humiliated as indignant at having heard it. Would not the most elementary good-breeding teach them to speak in a lower tone about such matters when we are near at hand? Étretat is, moreover, the country of gossip and scandal. From five to seven o'clock you can see people wandering about in quest of scandal, which they retail from group to group. As you remarked to me, my dear aunt, tittle-tattle is the mark of petty individuals and petty minds. It is also the consolation of women who are no longer loved or sought after. It is enough for me to observe the women who are fondest of gossiping to be persuaded that you are quite right.

The other day I was present at a musical evening at the Casino, given by a remarkable artist, Madame Masson, who sings in a truly delightful manner. I took the opportunity of applauding the admirable Coquelin, as well as two charming Vaudeville performers, M— and Meillet. I met, on this occasion, all the bathers who were at the beach. It is no great distinction this year.

Next day I went to lunch at Yport. I noticed a tall man with a beard, coming out of a large house like a castle. It was the painter, Jean Paul Laurens. He is not satisfied apparently with imprisoning the subjects of his pictures, he insists on imprisoning himself.

Then I found myself seated on the shingle close

to a man still young, of gentle and refined appearance, who was reading poems. But he read them with such concentration, with such passion, I may say, that he did not even raise his eyes toward me. I was somewhat astonished, and asked the proprietor of the baths, without appearing to be much concerned, the name of this gentleman. I laughed to myself a little at this reader of rhymes; he seemed behind the age, for a man. This person, I thought, must be a simpleton. Well, aunt, I am now infatuated about this stranger. Just fancy, his name is Sully-Prudhomme! I went back and sat down beside him again so as to get a good look at him. His face has an expression of calmness and of penetration. Somebody came to look for him, and I heard his voice, which is sweet and almost timid. He would certainly not tell obscene stories aloud in public, or knock against ladies without apologizing. He is assuredly a man of refinement, but his refinement is of an almost morbid, vibrating character. I will try this winter to get an introduction to him.

I have no more news, my dear aunt, and I must finish this letter in haste, as the mail will soon close. I kiss your hands and your cheeks.—Your devoted niece,

BERTHE DE X.

P. S.—I should add, however, by way of justification of French politeness, that our fellow-countrymen are, when traveling, models of good manners in comparison with the abominable English, who seem to have been brought up in a stable, so careful are they not to incommode themselves in any way, while they always incommode their neighbors.

Madame de L. to Madame de X.

Les Fresnes, Saturday.

My dear Child:—Many of the things you have said to me are very sensible, but that does not prevent you from being wrong. Like you, I used formerly to feel very indignant at the impoliteness of men, who, as I supposed, constantly treated me with neglect; but, as I grew older and reflected on everything, putting aside coquetry, and observing things without taking any part in them myself, I perceived this much—that if men are not always polite, women are always indescribably rude.

We imagine that we should be permitted to do anything, my darling, and at the same time we consider that we have a right to the utmost respect, and in the most flagrant manner we commit actions devoid of that elementary good-breeding of which you speak so feelingly.

I find, on the contrary, that men consider us much more than we consider them. Besides, darling, men must needs be, and are, what we make them. In a state of society, where women are all true gentlewomen, all men would become gentlemen.

Come now; just observe and reflect.

Look at two women meeting in the street. What an attitude each assumes toward the other! What disparaging looks! What contempt they throw into each glance! How they toss their heads while they inspect each other to find something to condemn! And, if the footpath is narrow, do you think one woman would make room for another, or would beg pardon as she sweeps by? Never! When two men jostle each other by accident in some narrow lane, each of them bows and at the same time gets out of

the other's way, while we women press against each other stomach to stomach, face to face, insolently staring each other out of countenance.

Look at two women who are acquaintances meeting on a staircase outside the door of a friend's drawing-room, one of them just leaving, the other about to go in. They begin to talk to each other, and block up all the landing. If anyone happens to be coming up behind them, man or woman, do you imagine that they will put themselves half an inch out of their way? Never! never!

I was waiting myself, with my watch in my hands, one day last winter, at a certain drawing-room door. And, behind me, two gentlemen were also waiting without showing any readiness as I did, to lose their temper. The reason was that they had long grown accustomed to our unconscionable insolence.

The other day, before leaving Paris, I went to dine with no less a person than your husband in the Champs Elysées in order to enjoy the fresh air. Every table was occupied. The waiter asked us to wait, and there would soon be a vacant table.

At that moment, I noticed an elderly lady of noble figure, who, having paid for her dinner, seemed on the point of going away. She saw me, scanned me from head to foot, and did not budge. For more than a quarter of an hour she sat there, immovable, putting on her gloves, and calmly staring at those who were waiting like myself. Now, two young men who were just finishing their dinner, having seen me in their turn, hastily summoned the waiter, paid what they owed, and at once offered me their seats, even insisting on standing while waiting for their change. And, bear in mind, my fair niece, that I am no longer pretty, like you, but old and white-haired.

It is we, you see, who should be taught politeness, and the task would be such a difficult one that Hercules himself would not be equal to it. You speak to me about Étretat, and about the people who indulged in " tittle-tattle " along the beach of that delightful watering-place. It is a spot now lost to me, a thing of the past, but I found much amusement there in days gone by.

There were only a few of us, people in good society, really good society, and a few artists, and we all fraternized. We paid little attention to gossip in those days.

As we had no monotonous Casino, where people only gather for show, where they whisper, where they dance stupidly, where they succeed in thoroughly boring one another, we sought some other way of passing our evenings pleasantly. Now, just guess what came into the head of one of our husbands? Nothing less than to go and dance each night in one of the farmhouses in the neighborhood.

We started out in a group with a street-organ, generally played by Le Poittevin, the painter, with a cotton nightcap on his head. Two men carried lanterns. We followed in procession, laughing and chattering like a pack of fools.

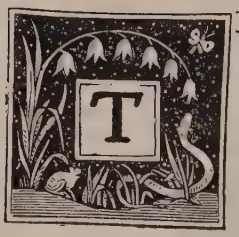
We woke up the farmer and his servant-maids and farm hands. We got them to make onion soup (horror!), and we danced under the apple trees, to the sound of the barrel-organ. The cocks waking up began to crow in the darkness of the out-houses; the horses began prancing on the straw of their stables. The cool air of the country caressed our cheeks with the smell of grass and of new-mown hay.

How long ago it is! How long ago it is! It is thirty years since then!

I do not want you, my darling, to come for the opening of the hunting season. Why spoil the pleasure of our friends by inflicting on them fashionable toilettes on this day of vigorous exercise in the country? This is the way, child, that men are spoiled. I embrace you.—Your old aunt,

GENEVIÉVE DE Z.

THE CORSICAN BANDIT



THE road ascended gently through the forest of Aïtone. The large pines formed a solemn dome above our heads, and that mysterious sound made by the wind in the trees sounded like the notes of an organ.

After walking for three hours, there was a clearing, and then at intervals an enormous pine umbrella, and then we suddenly came to the edge of the forest, some hundred meters below the pass leading to the wild valley of Niolo.

On the two projecting heights which commanded a view of this pass, some old trees, grotesquely twisted, seemed to have mounted with painful efforts, like scouts sent in advance of the multitude in the rear. When we turned round, we saw the entire forest stretched beneath our feet, like a gigantic basin of verdure, inclosed by bare rocks whose summits seemed to reach the sky.

We resumed our walk, and, ten minutes later, found ourselves in the pass.

Then I beheld a remarkable landscape. Beyond another forest stretched a valley, but a valley such as I had never seen before; a solitude of stone, ten

leagues long, hollowed out between two high mountains, without a field or a tree to be seen. This was the Niolo valley, the fatherland of Corsican liberty, the inaccessible citadel, from which the invaders had never been able to drive out the mountaineers.

My companion said to me: "This is where all our bandits have taken refuge."

Ere long we were at the further end of this gorge, so wild, so inconceivably beautiful.

Not a blade of grass, not a plant—nothing but granite. As far as our eyes could reach, we saw in front of us a desert of glittering stone, heated like an oven by a burning sun, which seemed to hang for that very purpose right above the gorge. When we raised our eyes towards the crests, we stood dazzled and stupefied by what we saw. They looked like a festoon of coral; all the summits are of porphyry; and the sky overhead was violet, purple, tinged with the coloring of these strange mountains. Lower down, the granite was of scintillating gray, and seemed ground to powder beneath our feet. At our right, along a long and irregular course roared a tumultous torrent. And we staggered along under this heat, in this light, in this burning, arid, desolate valley cut by this torrent of turbulent water which seemed to be ever hurrying onward, without fertilizing the rocks, lost in this furnace which greedily drank it up without being saturated or refreshed by it.

But suddenly there was visible at our right a little wooden cross sunk in a little heap of stones. A man had been killed there; and I said to my companion:

"Tell me about your bandits."

He replied:

" I knew the most celebrated of them, the terrible St. Lucia. I will tell you his history.

" His father was killed in a quarrel by a young man of the district, it is said; and St. Lucia was left alone with his sister. He was a weak, timid youth, small, often ill, without any energy. He did not proclaim vengeance against the assassin of his father. All his relatives came to see him, and implored of him to avenge his death; he remained deaf to their menaces and their supplications.

" Then, following the old Corsican custom, his sister, in her indignation, carried away his black clothes, in order that he might not wear mourning for a dead man who had not been avenged. He was insensible to even this affront, and rather than take down from the rack his father's gun, which was still loaded, he shut himself up, not daring to brave the looks of the young men of the district.

" He seemed to have even forgotten the crime, and lived with his sister in the seclusion of their dwelling.

" But, one day, the man who was suspected of having committed the murder was about to get married. St. Lucia did not appear to be moved by this news, but, out of sheer bravado, doubtless, the bridegroom, on his way to the church, passed before the house of the two orphans.

" The brother and the sister, at their window, were eating *frijoles* when the young man saw the bridal procession going by. Suddenly he began to tremble, rose to his feet without uttering a word, made the sign of the cross, took the gun which was hanging over the fireplace, and went out.

" When he spoke of this later on, he said: ' I don't know what was the matter with me; it was like

fire in my blood; I felt that I must do it, that in spite of everything I could not resist, and I concealed the gun in a cave on the road to Corte.'

"An hour later, he came back, with nothing in his hand, and with his habitual air of sad weariness. His sister believed that there was nothing further in his thoughts.

"But when night fell he disappeared.

"His enemy had, the same evening, to repair to Corte on foot, accompanied by his two groomsmen.

"He was walking along, singing as he went, when St. Lucia stood before him, and looking straight in the murderer's face, exclaimed: 'Now is the time!' and shot him point-blank in the chest.

"One of the men fled; the other stared at the young man saying:

"'What have you done, St. Lucia?' and he was about to hasten to Corte for help, when St. Lucia said in a stern tone:

"'If you move another step, I'll shoot you in the leg.'

"The other, aware of his timidity hitherto, replied: 'You would not dare to do it!' and was hurrying off when he fell instantaneously, his thigh shattered by a bullet.

"And St. Lucia, coming over to where he lay, said:

"'I am going to look at your wound; if it is not serious, I'll leave you there; if it is mortal I'll finish you off.'

"He inspected the wound, considered it mortal, and slowly reloading his gun, told the wounded man to say a prayer, and shot him through the head.

"Next day he was in the mountains.

"And do you know what this St. Lucia did after this?

" All his family were arrested by the gendarmes. His uncle, the curate, who was suspected of having incited him to this deed of vengeance, was himself put in prison, and accused by the dead man's relatives. But he escaped, took a gun in his turn, and went to join his nephew in the brush.

" Next, St. Lucia killed, one after the other, his uncle's accusers, and tore out their eyes to teach the others never to state what they had seen with their eyes.

" He killed all the relatives, all the connections of his enemy's family. He slew during his life fourteen gendarmes, burned down the houses of his adversaries, and was, up to the day of his death, the most terrible of all the bandits whose memory we have preserved."

* * * * * * * *

The sun disappeared behind Monte Cinto and the tall shadow of the granite mountain went to sleep on the granite of the valley. We quickened our pace in order to reach before night the little village of Albertaccio, nothing but a pile of stones welded into the stone flanks of a wild gorge. And I said as I thought of the bandit:

" What a terrible custom your vendetta is! "

My companion answered with an air of resignation:

" What would you have? A man must do his duty! "

THE BLIND MAN

HOW is it that the sunlight gives us such joy? Why does this radiance when it falls on the earth fill us with so much delight of living? The whole sky is blue, the fields are all green, the houses all white; and our enchanted eyes drink in those bright colors which bring delight to our souls. And then there springs up in our hearts a desire to dance, to run, to sing, a happy lightness of thought, a sort of enlarged tenderness; we feel a longing to embrace the sun.

The blind, as they sit in the doorways, impassive in their eternal darkness, remain as calm as ever in the midst of this fresh gaiety, and, not understanding what is taking place around them, they continually check their dogs as they attempt to play.

When, at the close of the day, they are returning home on the arm of a young brother or a little sister, if the child says: "It was a very fine day!" the other answers: "I could notice that it was fine. Loulou wouldn't keep quiet."

I knew one of these men whose life was one of the most cruel martyrdoms that could possibly be conceived.

He was a peasant, the son of a Norman farmer.

As long as his father and mother lived, he was more or less taken care of; he suffered little save from his horrible infirmity; but as soon as the old people were gone, an atrocious life of misery commenced for him. Dependent on a sister of his, everybody in the farmhouse treated him as a beggar who is eating the bread of strangers. At every meal the very food he swallowed was made a subject of reproach against him; he was called a drone, a clown; and although his brother-in-law had taken possession of his portion of the inheritance, he was helped grudgingly to soup, getting just enough to save him from starving.

His face was very pale, and his two big white eyes looked like wafers. He remained unmoved at all the insults hurled at him, so reserved that one could not tell whether he felt them.

Moreover, he had never known any tenderness, his mother having always treated him unkindly, and caring very little for him; for in country places useless persons are considered a nuisance, and the peasants would be glad to kill the infirm of their species, as poultry do.

As soon as he finished his soup, he went and sat outside the door in summer, and in winter beside the fireside, and did not stir again all the evening. He made no gesture, no movement; only his eyelids, quivering from some nervous affection, fell down sometimes over his white, sightless orbs. Had he any intellect, any thinking faculty, any consciousness of his own existence? Nobody cared to inquire.

For some years things went on in this fashion. But his incapacity for work as well as his impassiveness eventually exasperated his relatives, and he

became a laughing-stock, a sort of butt for merriment, a prey to the inborn ferocity, to the savage gaiety of the brutes who surrounded him.

It is easy to imagine all the cruel practical jokes inspired by his blindness. And, in order to have some fun in return for feeding him, they now converted his meals into hours of pleasure for the neighbors and of punishment for the helpless creature himself.

The peasants from the nearest houses came to this entertainment; it was talked about from door to door, and every day the kitchen of the farmhouse was full of people. Sometimes they placed before his plate, when he was beginning to eat his soup, some cat or dog. The animal instinctively perceived the man's infirmity, and, softly approaching, commenced eating noiselessly, lapping up the soup daintily; and, when a rather loud licking of the tongue awakened the poor fellow's attention, it would prudently scamper away to avoid the blow of the spoon directed at random by the blind man!

Then the spectators ranged along the wall would burst out laughing, nudge each other, and stamp their feet on the floor. And he, without ever uttering a word, would continue eating with his right hand, while stretching out his left to protect his plate.

Another time they made him chew corks, bits of wood, leaves, or even filth, which he was unable to distinguish.

After this, they got tired even of these practical jokes; the brother-in-law, angry at having to support him always, struck him, cuffed him incessantly, laughing at his futile efforts to ward off or return the blows. Then came a new pleasure—the pleasure

of smacking his face. And the plough-men, the servant girls, and even every passing vagabond were every moment giving him cuffs, which caused his eyelashes to twitch spasmodically. He did not know where to hide himself, and remained with his arms always held out to guard against people coming too close to him.

At last he was forced to beg.

He was placed somewhere on the highroad on market-days, and as soon as he heard the sound of footsteps or the rolling of a vehicle, he reached out his hat, stammering:

"Charity, if you please!"

But the peasant is not lavish, and for whole weeks he did not bring back a sou.

Then he became the victim of furious, pitiless hatred. And this is how he died.

One winter the ground was covered with snow, and it was freezing hard. His brother-in-law led him one morning a great distance along the highroad in order that he might solicit alms. The blind man was left there all day, and when night came on, the brother-in-law told the people of his house that he could find no trace of the mendicant. Then he added:

"Pooh! best not bother about him! He was cold, and got someone to take him away. Never fear! he's not lost. He'll turn up soon enough to-morrow to eat the soup."

Next day he did not come back.

After long hours of waiting, stiffened with the cold, feeling that he was dying, the blind man began to walk. Being unable to find his way along the road, owing to its thick coating of ice, he went on at random, falling into ditches, getting up again, without

uttering a sound, his sole object being to find some house where he could take shelter.

But, by degrees, the descending snow made a numbness steal over him, and his feeble limbs being incapable of carrying him farther, he sat down in the middle of an open field. He did not get up again.

The white flakes which fell continuously buried him, so that his body, quite stiff and stark, disappeared under the incessant accumulation of their rapidly thickening mass; and nothing was left to indicate the place where he lay.

His relatives made pretence of inquiring about him and searching for him for about a week. They even made a show of weeping.

The winter was severe, and the thaw did not set in quickly. Now, one Sunday, on their way to mass, the farmers noticed a great flight of crows, who were whirling incessantly above the open field, and then, descending like a shower of black rain, at the same spot, ever going and coming.

The following week these gloomy birds were still there. There was a crowd of them up in the air, as if they had gathered from all corners of the horizon; and they swooped down with a great cawing into the shining snow, which they covered like black patches, and in which they kept pecking obstinately. A young fellow went to see what they were doing, and discovered the body of the blind man, already half devoured, mangled. His wan eyes had disappeared, pecked out by the long, voracious beaks.

And I can never feel the glad radiance of sunlit days without sadly remembering and pondering over the fate of the beggar, who was such an outcast in life that his horrible death was a relief to all who had known him.

THE ADOPTED SON

THE two cottages stood beside each other at the foot of a hill near a little seaside resort. The two peasants labored hard on the unproductive soil to rear their little ones, and each family had four.

Before the adjoining doors a whole troop of urchins played and tumbled about from morning till night. The two eldest were six years old, and the youngest were about fifteen months; the marriages, and afterward the births, having taken place nearly simultaneously in both families.

The two mothers could hardly distinguish their own offspring among the lot, and as for the fathers, they were altogether at sea. The eight names danced in their heads; they were always getting them mixed up; and when they wished to call one child, the men often called three names before getting the right one.

The first of the two cottages, coming up from the bathing beach, Belleport, was occupied by the Tuvaches, who had three girls and one boy; the other house sheltered the Vallins, who had one girl and three boys.

They all subsisted with difficulty on soup, potatoes, and the open air. At seven o'clock in the morning, then at noon, then at six o'clock in the evening, the housewives got their broods together to give them their food, as the gooseherds collect their charges. The children were seated, according to age, before the wooden table, varnished by fifty years of use; the mouths of the youngest hardly reaching the level of the table. Before them was placed a deep dish filled with bread, soaked in the water in which the potatoes had been boiled, half a cabbage and three onions; and the whole line ate until their hunger was appeased. The mother herself fed the smallest.

A little meat, boiled in a soup, on Sunday, was a feast for all; and the father on this day sat longer over the meal, repeating: "I wish we could have this every day."

One afternoon, in the month of August, a little carriage stopped suddenly in front of the cottages, and a young woman, who was driving the horses, said to the gentleman sitting at her side:

"Oh, look at all those children, Henri! How pretty they are, tumbling about in the dust, like that!"

The man did not answer, accustomed to these outbursts of admiration, which were a pain and almost a reproach to him. The young woman continued:

"I must hug them! Oh, how I should like to have

one of them—that one there—the little bit of a darling!"

Springing down from the carriage, she ran toward the children, took one of the two youngest—that of the Tuvaches—and lifting it up in her arms, she kissed him passionately on his dirty cheeks, on his tousled hair daubed with earth, and on his little hands, which he swung vigorously, to get rid of the caresses which displeased him.

Then she got up into the carriage again, and drove off at a lively trot. But she returned the following week, and seating herself on the ground, took the youngster in her arms, stuffed him with cakes, gave candies to all the others, and played with them like a young girl, while the husband waited patiently in the carriage.

She returned again; made the acquaintance of the parents, and reappeared every day with her pockets full of dainties and pennies.

Her name was Madame Henri d'Hubières.

One morning, on arriving, her husband alighted with her, and without stopping with the children, who now knew her well, she entered the farmer's cottage.

They were busy chopping wood for the fire, They straightened up, offered chairs, and waited expectantly.

Then the woman, in a broken, trembling voice, began:

"My good people, I have come to see you, because I should like—I should like to take—your little boy with me——"

The country people, too bewildered to think, did not answer.

She recovered her breath, and continued: "We

are alone, my husband and I. We would keep it. Are you willing?"

The peasant woman began to understand. She asked:

"You want to take Charlot from us? Oh, no, indeed!"

Then M. d'Hubières intervened:

"My wife has not made her meaning clear. We wish to adopt him, but he will come back to see you. If he turns out well, as there is every reason to expect, he will be our heir. If we, perchance, should have children, he will share equally with them; but if he should not reward our care, we should give him, when he comes of age, a sum of twenty thousand francs, which shall be deposited immediately in his name, with a lawyer. As we have thought also of you, we should pay you, until your death, a pension of one hundred francs a month. Do you understand me?"

The woman had arisen, furious.

"You want me to sell you Charlot? Oh, no, that's not the sort of thing to ask of a mother! Oh, no! That would be an abomination!"

The man, grave and deliberate, said nothing; but approved of what his wife said by a continued nodding of his head.

Madame d'Hubières, in dismay, began to weep; turning to her husband, with a voice full of tears, the voice of a child used to having all its wishes gratified, she stammered:

"They will not do it, Henri, they will not do it."

Then he made a last attempt: "But, my friends, think of the child's future, of his happiness, of——"

The peasant woman, however, exasperated, cut him short:

"It's all considered! It's all understood! Get out of here, and don't let me see you again—the idea of wanting to take away a child like that!"

Madame d'Hubières remembered that there were two children, quite little, and she asked, through her tears, with the tenacity of a wilful and spoiled woman:

"But is the other little one not yours?"

Father Tuvache answered: "No, it is our neighbors'. You can go to them if you wish." And he went back into his house, whence resounded the indignant voice of his wife.

The Vallins were at table, slowly eating slices of bread which they parsimoniously spread with a little rancid butter on a plate between the two.

M. d'Hubières began to make his propositions, but with more insinuations, more oratorical precautions, more guile.

The two country people shook their heads, in sign of refusal, but when they learned that they were to have a hundred francs a month, they considered the matter, consulting one another by glances, much disturbed. They kept silent for a long time, tortured, hesitating. At last the woman asked: "What do you say to it, man?" In a weighty tone he said: "I say that it's not to be despised."

Madame d'Hubières, trembling with anguish, spoke of the future of their child, of his happiness, and of the money which he could give them later.

The peasant asked: "This pension of twelve hundred francs, will it be promised before a lawyer?"

M. d'Hubières responded: "Why, certainly, beginning with to-morrow."

The woman, who was thinking it over, continued: "A hundred francs a month is not enough to

deprive us of the child. That child would be working in a few years; we must have a hundred and twenty francs."

Stamping with impatience, Madame d'Hubières granted it at once, and, as she wished to carry off the child with her, she gave a hundred francs extra, as a present, while her husband drew up a paper. And the young woman, radiant, carried off the howling brat, as one carries away a wished-for knick-knack from a shop.

The Tuvaches, from their door, watched her departure—mute, severe, perhaps regretting their refusal.

Nothing more was heard of little Jean Vallin. The parents went to the lawyer every month to collect their hundred and twenty francs, and they were angry with their neighbors, because Mother Tuvache grossly insulted them, continually, repeating from door to door that one must be unnatural to sell one's child; that it was horrible, disgusting, and many other vile expressions. Sometimes she would take her Charlot in her arms, ostentatiously exclaiming, as if he understood:

"I didn't sell *you,* I didn't! I didn't sell *you,* my little one! I'm not rich, but I don't sell my children!"

The Vallins lived comfortably, thanks to the pension. That was the cause of the inappeasable fury of the Tuvaches, who had remained miserably poor. Their eldest went away to serve his time in the army; Charlot alone remained to labor with his old father, to support the mother and two younger sisters which he had.

He had reached twenty-one years when, one morning, a brilliant carriage stopped before the two cot-

tages. A young gentleman, with a gold watch-chain, got out, giving his hand to an aged, white-haired lady. The old lady said to him: "It is there, my child, at the second house." And he entered the house of the Vallins as though at home.

The old mother was washing her aprons; the infirm father slumbered at the chimney-corner. Both raised their heads, and the young man said:

"Good morning, papa; good morning, mamma!"

They both stood up, frightened! In a flutter, the peasant woman dropped her soap into the water, and stammered:

"Is it you, my child? Is it you, my child?"

He took her in his arms and hugged her, repeating: "Good morning, mamma," while the old man, all a-tremble, said, in his calm tone which he never lost: "Here you are, back again, Jean," as if he had just seen him a month ago.

When they had got to know one another again, the parents wished to take their boy out through the neighborhood, and show him. They took him to the mayor, to the deputy, to the *curé,* and to the schoolmaster.

Charlot, standing on the threshold of his cottage, watched him pass.

In the evening, at supper, he said to the old people: "You must have been stupid to let the Vallins's boy be taken."

The mother answered, obstinately: "I wouldn't sell *my* child."

The father remained silent. The son continued: "It is unfortunate to be sacrificed like that." Then Father Tuvache, in an angry tone, said:

"Are you going to reproach us for having kept you?" And the young man said, brutally:

" Yes, I reproach you for having been such fools. Parents like you make the misfortune of their children. You deserve that I should leave you."

The old woman wept over her plate. She moaned, as she swallowed the spoonfuls of soup, half of which she spilled: " One may kill one's self to bring up children."

Then the boy said, roughly: " I'd rather not have been born than be what I am. When I saw the other, my heart stood still. I said to myself: ' See what I should have been now! ' " He got up: " See here, I feel that I would do better not to stay here, because I would hold it up to you from morning till night, and I would make your life miserable. I'll never forgive you for that! "

The two old people were silent, downcast, in tears.

He continued: " No, the thought of that would be too much. I'd rather look for a living somewhere else."

He opened the door. A sound of voices entered. The Vallins were celebrating the return of their child.

THE HAND

ALL were crowding around M. Bermutier, the judge, who was giving his opinion about the Saint-Cloud mystery. For a month, this inexplicable crime had been the talk of Paris. Nobody could make head or tail of it.

M. Bermutier, standing with his back to the fireplace, was talking, reciting the proofs, discussing the various theories, but arriving at no conclusion.

Some women had arisen, in order to get nearer to him, and were standing with their eyes fastened on the clean-shaven face of the judge, who was saying such weighty things. They were shaking and trembling, moved by fear and curiosity, and by the eager and insatiable need for terror which haunts the soul of every woman. One of them, paler than the others, said, during a pause:

"It's terrible. It reaches the confines of the supernatural. The truth will never be known."

The judge turned to her:

" True, Madame, it is likely that the actual facts will never be discovered. As for the word ' supernatural' which you have just used, it has nothing to do with the matter. We are in the presence of a very cleverly conceived and executed crime, so well enshrouded in mystery that we cannot disentangle it from the impenetrable circumstances which surround it. But formerly, I had to take charge of an affair in which the uncanny seemed to play a part. In fact, the case became so confused that it had to be given up."

Several women exclaimed at once:

" Oh! Tell us about it! "

M. Bermutier smiled, in a dignified manner, as a judge should, and went on:

" Do not think, however, that I, for one minute, ascribed anything in the case to supernatural influences. I only believe in normal causes. But if, instead of using the word ' supernatural' to express what we do not understand, we were simply to make use of the word ' inexplicable,' it would be much better. At any rate, in the affair of which I am about to tell you, it is especially the surrounding, preliminary circumstances which impressed me. Here are the facts:

" I was, at that time, a judge at Ajaccio, a little white city on the edge of a bay which is surrounded by high mountains.

" The majority of the cases which came up before me concerned vendettas. There are superb, dramatic, ferocious, heroic ones. We find there the most beautiful causes for revenge of which one could dream, hundreds of years old, quieted for a time but never extinguished; abominable stratagems, murders becoming massacres and almost deeds of

glory. For two years I heard of nothing but the price of blood, of this terrible Corsican prejudice which compels revenge for insults to be meted out to the person and all his descendants and relatives.

I had seen old men, children, cousins murdered; my head was full of these stories.

"One day, I learned that an Englishman had just hired a little villa at the end of the bay, for several years. He had brought with him a French servant, whom he had engaged at Marseilles on his way through.

"Soon this peculiar person, living alone, only going out to hunt and fish, aroused a widespread interest. He never spoke to anyone, never went to the town, and every morning he would practise, for an hour or so, with his revolver and rifle.

"Legends were built up around him. It was said that he was some high personage, fleeing from his fatherland for political reasons; then it was claimed that he was hiding after having committed some abominable crime. Some particularly horrible circumstances were even mentioned.

" In my judicial position I thought it necessary to get some information about this man; but it was impossible to learn anything. He called himself Sir John Rowell.

" I therefore had to be satisfied to watch him as closely as I could; but I could notice nothing suspicious about his actions.

" However, as rumors about him were growing and becoming more widespread, I decided to try to see this stranger myself, and I began regularly to hunt in the neighborhood of his grounds.

" For a long time, I watched without finding an opportunity. At last it was presented to me in the shape of a partridge which I shot and killed right in front of the Englishman. My dog fetched it for me; but, immediately taking the bird, I went to Sir John Rowell and, begging his pardon, I asked him to accept it.

" He was a big man, with red hair and beard, very tall, very broad, a kind of calm and polite Hercules. He had nothing of the so-called British stiffness, and in a broad English accent he thanked me warmly for my attention. At the end of a month, we had had five or six conversations.

" One night, at last, as I was passing before his door, I saw him in the garden, seated astride a chair, smoking his pipe. I bowed, and he invited me to come in and have a glass of beer. I needed no urging.

" He received me with the most punctilious English courtesy, sang the praises of France and of Corsica, and declared that he was quite in love with this country.

" Then, with great caution and under the guise of a vivid interest, I asked him a few questions about

his life and his plans. He answered without embarrassment, telling me that he had traveled a great deal in Africa, in the Indies, in America. He added, laughing:

"'I have had many adventures.'

"Then I turned the conversation to hunting, and he gave me many curious details about hippopotamus, tiger, elephant, and even gorilla hunting.

"I said:

"'Are all these animals dangerous?'

"He smiled:

"'Oh, no! The worst is man.'

"And he laughed a good broad laugh, the wholesome laugh of a self-satisfied Briton:

"'I have also frequently been man-hunting.'

"Then he began to talk about weapons, and he invited me to come in and see the guns which he had of different makes.

"His parlor was draped in black—black silk trimmed with gold. Big yellow flowers, as brilliant as fire, were embroidered on the dark material.

"'It is Japanese cloth,' said he.

"But in the middle of the largest panel of the room, a strange thing attracted my attention. A black object stood out against a background of scarlet velvet. I went up to it; it was a hand, a human hand. Not the clean white hand of a skeleton, but a dried, black hand, with yellow nails, the muscles exposed and traces of old blood on the bones, which were cut off as clean as though it had been chopped off with an axe, near the middle of the forearm.

"Around the wrist, an enormous iron chain, riveted and soldered to this unclean organ, bound it to the wall by a ring, strong enough to hold an elephant in leash.

" I asked:

" 'What is that?'

" The Englishman answered quietly:

" 'That is my best friend. It comes from America, too. The bones were split by a sword, and the skin cut off with a sharp stone and dried in the sun for a week.'

" I touched these human remains, which must have belonged to a giant. The uncommonly long fingers were attached by enormous tendons which still had pieces of skin hanging to them in places. This hand was terrible to see; it made one think of some savage vengeance.

" I said:

" ' This man must have been very strong.'

" The Englishman answered quietly:

" ' Yes, but I was stronger than he. I put on this chain to hold him.'

" I thought that he was joking. I said:

" ' This chain is useless now, the hand won't run away.'

" Sir John Rowell answered seriously:

" ' It always wants to go away. This chain is needed.'

" I glanced at him quickly, questioning his face; and I asked myself:

" ' Is he an insane man or a practical joker?'

" But his face remained inscrutable, calm and friendly. I turned to other subjects, and admired his rifles.

" However, I noticed that he kept three loaded revolvers in the room, as though constantly in fear of some attack.

" I paid him several other calls. Then I went no

more. People had become used to his presence; everybody had lost interest in him.

* * * * * * *

" A whole year rolled by. One morning, toward the end of November, my servant awoke me and announced that Sir John Rowell had been murdered during the night.

" Half an hour later I entered the Englishman's house together with the police commissioner and the captain of the gendarmes. The servant, bewildered and in despair, was crying before the door. At first I suspected this man, but he was innocent.

" The guilty party could never be found.

" On entering Sir John's parlor, I noticed the body, stretched out on its back, in the middle of the room.

" His vest was torn, the sleeve of his jacket had been pulled off, everything pointed to a violent struggle.

" The Englishman had been strangled! His face was black and swollen, seeming to express a terrible fear. He held something between his teeth; and his neck, pierced by five or six holes which looked as though they had been made by some iron instrument, was covered with blood.

" A physician joined us. He examined the finger-marks on the neck for a long time and then made this strange announcement:

" ' It looks as though he had been strangled by a skeleton.'

" A cold chill seemed to run down my back, and I looked over to where I had formerly seen the terrible hand. It was no longer there. The chain was hanging down, broken.

" I bent over the dead man and, in his contracted mouth, I found one of the fingers of this vanished hand, cut—or rather sawed off by the teeth—down to the second knuckle.

" Then the investigation began. Nothing could be discovered. No door, window, or piece of furniture had been forced. The two watch-dogs had not been aroused from their sleep.

" Here, in a few words, is the testimony of the servant:

" For a month his master had seemed excited. He had received many letters, which he would immediately burn.

" Often, in a fit of passion which approached madness, he had taken a switch and struck wildly at this dried hand, riveted to the wall, and which had disappeared, no one knows how, at the very hour of the crime.

" He would go to bed very late and carefully lock himself in. He always kept weapons within reach. Often at night he would talk loudly, as though he were quarreling with someone.

" That night, somehow, he had made no noise, and it was only on going to open the windows that the servant had found Sir John murdered. He suspected no one.

" I communicated what I knew of the dead man to the judges and public officials; throughout the whole island a minute investigation was carried on. Nothing could be found out.

" One night, about three months after the crime, I had a terrible nightmare. I seemed to see the horrible hand running over my curtains and walls like an immense scorpion or spider. Three times I awoke, three times I went to sleep again; three times

I saw the hideous object galloping around my room and moving its fingers like legs.

"The following day the hand was brought me, found in the cemetery, on the grave of Sir John Rowell, who had been buried there because we had been unable to find his family. The first finger was missing.

"Ladies, there is my story. I know nothing more."

* * * * * * *

The women, deeply stirred, were pale and trembling. One of them exclaimed:

"But that is neither a climax nor an explanation! We shall be unable to sleep, unless you tell, in your opinion, what had happened."

The judge smiled severely:

"Oh! Ladies, I shall certainly spoil your terrible dreams. I simply believe that the legitimate owner of the hand was not dead, that he came to get it with his remaining one. But I don't know how. It was a kind of vendetta."

One of the women murmured:

"No, that can't be it."

And the judge, still smiling, said:

"Didn't I tell you that my explanation would not satisfy you?"

FATHER MILON

FOR a month the hot sun has been parching the fields. Life is dawning, the fields are green as far as one can see. The big azure dome of the sky is unclouded. The farms of Normandy, scattered over the plains and surrounded by great hedges, look, from a distance, like little forests. When near, after lowering the worm-eaten wooden bars, you imagine yourself in a giant garden, for all the ancient apple trees, as gnarled as the peasants themselves, are in bloom. The sweet scent of their blossoms mingles with the heavy smell of the earth and the penetrating odor of the stables. It is noon. The family is eating under the shade of a pear tree planted beside the door: father, mother, the four children, and the help—two women and three men—are all there. All are silent. The soup is eaten and the stew is brought on.

From time to time one of the women gets up and takes a pitcher down to the cellar to fetch more cider.

The husband, a big fellow about forty years old, is watching a grapevine, still bare, which is winding and twisting like a snake along the side of the house.

At last he says: "Father's vine is budding early this year. Perhaps we may get something from it."

This wife then turns around and looks, without saying a word.

This vine is planted on the spot where their father had been shot.

It was during the war of 1870. The Prussians were occupying the whole country. General Faidherbe, with the Northern Division, was opposing them.

The Prussians had established their headquarters at this farm. The old farmer to whom it belonged, Father Pierre Milon, had received and quartered them to the best of his ability.

For a month the German vanguard had been in this village. The French remained motionless, ten leagues away; and yet, every night, some of the Uhlans disappeared.

Of all the isolated scouts, of all those who were sent to the outposts, in groups of not more than three, not one ever returned.

They were picked up the next morning in a field or in a ditch. Even their horses were found along the roads with their throats cut.

These murders seemed to be done by the same men, who could never be found.

The country was terrorized. Farmers were shot on suspicion, women were imprisoned; children were frightened in order to obtain information. Nothing could be ascertained.

But one morning Father Milon was found stretched out in the barn, his face cut by a big gash.

Two Uhlans were found dead about a mile and a half from the farm. One of them was still holding his bloody sword in his hand. He had fought, tried to defend himself. A court-martial was immediately held in the open air, in front of the farm-house. The old man was brought before it.

He was sixty-eight years old, small, thin, bent, with two big hands resembling the claws of a lobster. His colorless hair was sparse and thin, like the down of a young duck, allowing the patches of his scalp to be seen. The brown and wrinkled skin of his neck showed big veins which disappeared behind his jaws and came out again at the temples. He had the reputation of being miserly and hard to deal with.

They stood him up between four soldiers, in front of the kitchen table, which had been dragged outside. Five officers and the colonel seated themselves opposite him.

The Colonel spoke in French:

" Father Milon, since we have been here we have only had praise for you. You have always been obliging and even attentive to us. But to-day a terrible accusation is hanging over you, and you must clear the matter up. How did you receive that wound on your face? "

The peasant answered nothing.

The Colonel continued:

" Your silence accuses you, Father Milon. But I want you to answer me! Do you understand? Do you know who killed the two Uhlans who were found this morning near Calvaire? "

The old man answered clearly:

" I did."

The Colonel, surprised, was silent for a minute, looking straight at the prisoner. Father Milon stood impassive, with the stupid look of the peasant, his eyes lowered as though he were talking to the priest. Just one thing betrayed an uneasy mind; he was continually swallowing his saliva, with a visible effort, as though his throat were terribly contracted.

The man's family, his son Jean, his daughter-in-law and his two grandchildren were standing a few feet behind him, bewildered and affrighted.

The Colonel went on:

"Do you also know who killed all the scouts who have been found dead, for a month, throughout the country, every morning?"

The old man answered with the same stupid look:

"I did."

"You killed them all?"

"Yes!"

"You alone?"

"Yes!"

"Tell me how you did it."

This time the man seemed moved; the necessity for talking any length of time annoyed him visibly. He stammered:

"I don't know! I simply did it."

The Colonel continued:

"I warn you that you will have to tell me everything. You might as well make up your mind right away. How did you begin?"

The man cast a troubled look toward his family, standing close behind him. He hesitated a minute longer, and then suddenly made up his mind to obey the order.

"I was coming home one night at about ten o'clock, the night after you got here. You and your

soldiers had taken more than fifty *écus* worth of forage from me, as well as a cow and two sheep. I said to myself: ' As much as they take from you, just so much will you make them pay back.' And then I had other things on my mind which I will tell you. Just then I noticed one of your soldiers who was smoking his pipe by the ditch behind the barn. I went and got my scythe and crept up slowly behind him, so that he couldn't hear me. And I cut his head off with one single blow, just as I would a blade of grass, before he could say ' Booh! ' If you should look at the bottom of the pond, you will find him tied up in a potato-bag, with a stone fastened to it.

" I got an idea. I took all his clothes, from his boots to his cap, and hid them away in the little woods behind the yard."

The old man stopped. The officers remained speechless, looking at each other. The questioning began again, and this is what they learned.

Once this murder committed, the man had lived with this one thought: " Kill the Prussians! " He hated them with the blind, fierce hate of the greedy yet patriotic peasant. He had his idea, as he said. He waited several days.

He was allowed to go and come as he pleased, because he had shown himself so humble, submissive and obliging to the invaders. Each night he saw the outposts leave. One night he followed them, having heard the name of the village to which the men were going, and having learned the few words of German which he needed for his plan through frequenting with the soldiers.

He left through the back yard, slipped into the

woods, found the dead man's clothes and put them on. Then he began to crawl through the fields, following along the hedges in order to keep out of sight, listening to the slightest noises, as wary as a poacher.

As soon as he thought the time ripe, he approached the road and hid behind a bush. He waited for a while. Finally, toward midnight, he heard the sound of a galloping horse. The man put his ear to the ground in order to make sure that only one horseman was approaching, then he got ready.

An Uhlan came along, carrying despatches. When he was only a few feet away, Father Milon dragged himself across the road, moaning: "*Hilfe! Hilfe!*" ("Help! Help!") The horseman stopped, and recognizing a German, he thought him wounded and dismounted, coming nearer without any suspicions, and just as he was leaning over the unknown man, he received, in the pit of his stomach, a heavy thrust from the long curved blade of the saber. He dropped without agony, shaken only by a few last quivers. Then the farmer, radiant with the silent joy of an old peasant, got up again, and, for his own pleasure, cut the dead man's throat. Then he dragged the body to the ditch and threw it in.

The horse quietly awaited its master. Father Milon mounted him and started galloping across the plains.

About an hour later he noticed two more Uhlans who were returning home side by side. He rode straight for them, once more crying "*Hilfe! Hilfe!*" The Prussians, recognizing the uniform, let him approach without distrust. The old man passed between them like a cannon-ball, felling them both, one with his saber and the other with a revolver.

Then he killed the horses, German horses! After that he quickly returned to the woods and hid one of the horses. He left his uniform there and again put on his old clothes; then back into bed, he slept until morning.

For four days he did not go out, waiting for the inquest to be terminated; but on the fifth day he went out again and killed two more soldiers by the same stratagem. From that time on he did not stop. Each night he wandered around in search of adventure, killing Prussians sometimes here and sometimes there, galloping through deserted fields, under the moon, a lost Uhlan, a hunter of men. Then his task accomplished, leaving behind him the bodies stretched along the roads, the old farmer would return and hide his horse and uniform.

He went, toward noon, to carry oats and water quietly to his mount, and he fed it well, demanding from it a great amount of work.

But, this time, one of those whom he had attacked happened to be guarding himself, and slashed the old peasant across the face with his saber.

However, he had killed them both. He had come back and hidden the horse and uniform; but as he reached home he began to feel faint, and he had dragged himself as far as the stable, being unable to reach the house.

They had found him there, bleeding, on the straw.

When he had finished his tale, he suddenly lifted up his head and proudly looked at the Prussian officers.

The Colonel, who was gnawing at his mustache, asked:

"You have nothing else to say?"

"Nothing more; I have finished my task: I killed sixteen, not one more or less."

"Do you know that you are going to die?"

"I haven't asked for mercy."

"Have you been a soldier?"

"Yes, I have served my time. And then, you had killed my father, who was a soldier of the first Emperor. And last month you killed my youngest son, François, near Evreux. I owed you something; I paid. We are quits."

The officers were looking at each other.

The old man continued:

"Eight for my father, eight for the boy—we are quits. I didn't seek any quarrel with you. I don't know you. I don't even know where you come from. And here you are, ordering me around in my home as though I were in yours. I took my revenge upon the others. I'm not sorry."

And, straightening up his bent back, the old man crossed his arms in a humble yet heroic pose.

The Prussians whispered for a long time. One of them, a captain who had lost his son a month previous, was defending the poor wretch. Then the Colonel arose and, approaching Father Milon, he said in a low voice:

"Listen, old man, there is perhaps a way of saving your life, it is to——"

But the man was not listening, and, his eyes fixed on the hated officer, while the wind played with the downy hair on his head, he distorted his slashed face, giving it a truly terrible expression, and, filling his lungs, he spat, as hard as he could, right on the Prussian's cheek.

The Colonel wildly lifted his hand, and for the second time the man spat in his face.

All the officers had jumped up and were shrieking orders at the same time.

In less than a minute the old man, still impassive, was pushed up against the wall and shot, looking smilingly the while toward Jean, his eldest son, his daughter-in-law and his two grandchildren, who witnessed this scene in dumb terror.

A VENDETTA

THE widow of Paolo Saverini lived alone with her son in a poor little house on the outskirts of Bonifacio. The city, built on an outjutting part of the mountain, in places even overhanging the sea, looks across the foamy straits towards the southernmost coast of Sardinia. Around on the other side of the city is a kind of *fjord* which serves as a port, and which, after a winding journey, brings—as far as the first houses—the little Italian and Sardinian fishing-smacks and, every two weeks, the old, wheezy steamer which makes the trip to Ajaccio.

On the white mountain, the clump of houses makes an even whiter spot. They look like the nests of wild birds, clinging to this peak, overlooking this terrible passage, where vessels rarely venture. The wind, which blows uninterruptedly, has swept bare the forbidding coast; it engulfs itself in the narrow

straits and lays waste both sides. The pale streaks of foam, clinging to the black rocks, whose countless peaks rise up out of the water, look like bits of rag floating and drifting on the surface of the sea.

The house of Widow Saverini, clinging to the very edge of the precipice, looked out, through its three windows, over this wild and desolate picture. She lived there alone, with her son Antoine and their dog Semillante, a big thin beast, with a long rough coat, one of the kind of animals that is used for guarding the herds. The young man took her with him when out hunting.

One night, after some kind of a quarrel, Antoine Saverini was treacherously stabbed by Nicolas Ravolati, who escaped the same evening to Sardinia.

When the old mother received the body of her child, which the neighbors had brought back to her, she did not cry, but she stayed there for a long time motionless, watching him; then, stretching her wrinkled hand over the body, she promised him a vendetta. She did not wish anybody near her, and she shut herself up beside the body with the dog, which was howling continuously, standing at the foot of the bed, her head stretched towards her master and her tail between her legs. She did not move any more than did the mother, who, now leaning over the body, with a blank stare, was weeping silently and watching it.

The young man, lying on his back, dressed in his jacket of coarse cloth, torn at the chest, seemed to be asleep; but he had blood all over him; on his shirt, which had been torn off in order to administer the first aid; on his vest, on his trousers, on his face, on his hands. Clots of blood had hardened in his beard and in his hair.

His old mother began to talk to him. At the sound of this voice the dog quieted down.

"Never fear, my boy, my little baby, you shall be avenged. Sleep, sleep, you shall be avenged, do you hear? It's your mother's promise! And she always keeps her word, your mother does, you know she does."

Slowly she leaned over him, pressing her cold lips to his dead ones.

Then Semillante began to howl again, with a long, monotonous, penetrating, horrible howl.

The two of them, the woman and the dog, remained there until morning.

Antoine Saverini was buried the next day, and soon his name ceased to be mentioned in Bonifacio.

❧

He had neither brothers nor cousins. No man was there to carry on the vendetta. Alone his mother thought of it; and she was an old woman.

On the other side of the straits, she saw, from morning until night, a little white speck on the coast. It was the little Sardinian village, Longosardo, where Corsican criminals take refuge when they are too closely pursued. They compose almost the entire population of this hamlet, opposite their native island, awaiting the time to return. She knew that Nicolas Ravolati had sought refuge in this village.

All alone, all day long, seated at her window, she was looking over there and thinking of revenge. How could she do anything without help—she, an invalid, and so near death? But she had promised, she had sworn on the body. She could not forget, she could not wait. What could she do? She no longer slept

at night; she had neither rest nor peace of mind; she thought stubbornly. The dog, dozing at her feet, would sometimes lift her head and howl. Since her master's death, she often howled thus, as though she were calling him, as though her beast's soul, inconsolable, too, had also kept something in memory which nothing could wipe out.

One night, as Semillante began to howl, the mother suddenly got hold of an idea—a savage, vindictive, fierce idea. She thought it over until morning; then, having arisen at daybreak, she went to church. She prayed, prostrate on the floor, begging the Lord to help her, to support her, to give to her poor, broken-down body the strength which she needed in order to avenge her son.

She returned home. In her yard, she had an old barrel, which served as a cistern; she turned it over, emptied it, made it fast to the ground with sticks and stones; then she chained Semillante to this improvised kennel and went into the house.

She was walking around ceaselessly now, her eye always fastened on the distant coast of Sardinia. He was over there, the murderer.

All day and all night the dog howled. In the morning, the old woman brought her some water in a bowl; but nothing more; no soup, no bread.

Another day went by. Semillante, weakened, was sleeping. The following day, her eyes were shining, her hair was on end and she was pulling wildly at her chain.

All this day the old woman gave her nothing to eat. The beast, furious, was barking hoarsely. Another night went by.

Then, at daybreak, Mother Saverini asked a neighbor for some straw. She took the old rags

which had formerly been worn by her husband and stuffed them so as to make them look like a human body.

Having planted a stick in the ground, in front of Semillante's kennel, she tied to it this dummy, which seemed to be standing up. Then she made a head out of some old rags.

The dog, surprised, was watching this straw man, and was quiet, although famished. Then the old woman went to the store and bought a piece of black sausage. When she got home, she started a fire in the yard, near the kennel, and cooked the sausage. Semillante, wild, was jumping around and frothing at the mouth, her eyes fixed on the food, whose smell went right to her stomach.

Then, with the smoking sausage, the mother made a necktie for the dummy. She tied it very tightly around the neck, and when she had finished she untied the dog.

With one leap, the beast jumped at the dummy's throat, and, with her paws on his shoulders she began to tear at it. She would fall back with a piece of food in her mouth, then she would jump again, sinking her fangs into the ropes, and snatching a few pieces of meat she would fall back again, and once more spring forward. She was tearing the face with her teeth, and the whole collar had disappeared.

The old woman, motionless and silent, was watching eagerly. Then she chained the beast up again, made her fast for two more days, and began this strange exercise again.

For three months she trained her to this battle, to this meal conquered by a fight. She no longer chained her up, but just pointed to the dummy.

She had taught her to tear him up and to devour

him without even hiding any food about his neck. Then, as a reward, she would give her a piece of sausage.

As soon as she would see the man, Semillante would begin to tremble, then she would look up to her mistress, who, lifting her finger, would cry: "Go!"

When she thought that the proper time had come, the widow went to confession and, one Sunday morning she partook of communion with an ecstatic fervor; then, having put on men's clothes, looking like an old tramp, she struck a bargain with a Sardinian fisherman who carried her and her dog to the other side of the straits.

In a bag, she had a large piece of sausage. Semillante had had nothing to eat for two days. The old woman kept letting her smell the food, and goading her.

They got to Longosardi. The Corsican woman walked with a limp. She went to a baker's shop and asked for Nicolas Ravolati. He had taken up his old trade, that of carpenter. He was working alone at the back of his store.

The old woman opened the door and called:

"Say! Nicolas!"

He turned around; then she, releasing her dog, cried:

"Go, go! Eat him up! Eat him up!"

The maddened animal sprang for his throat. The man stretched out his arms, seized the dog and rolled to the ground. For a few seconds, he squirmed, beating the ground with his feet; then he stopped moving, while Semillante dug her fangs into his

throat and tore it to ribbons. Two neighbors, seated before their door, remembered perfectly having seen an old beggar come out with a thin, black dog which was eating something that its master was giving her.

At nightfall the old woman was home again. She slept well that night.

MADNESS?

WHEN I was told: "Did you hear that Jacques Parent died in an insane asylum?" a shiver of fear and anguish chilled me to the marrow; and I again saw this strange fellow, who perhaps had been mad for a long time, even a frightful maniac.

He was a man of about forty, tall, thin, a little bent, with shining black eyes, so black that one could not see the pupils, shifting, sick, haunted. What a strange being he was, bringing with him a strange uneasiness of the body and soul, an incomprehensible nervousness, which makes one believe in supernatural influences!

He had an annoying habit: that of hiding his hands. He never let them wander around, as we do on objects about the table. He never handled things with the familiar, lingering touch that almost all men have. He never left these long, bony, slender hands uncovered. He would shove them in his pockets or hide them in his armpits by crossing

his arms. One might think that he was afraid that they would do something against his will, something forbidden, some shameful or ridiculous action, if he left them free and master of their movements. When he had to use them for all the ordinary actions of life, he did it by quick jerks, as if he did not wish to leave them time to act of their own accord, to brave his will, to do something else. At the table he would seize his glass, his knife, or his fork so quickly that one never had time to foresee what he was going to do before the act was accomplished.

One evening I had an explanation of the surprising malady of his soul. From time to time he would spend a few days with me in the country, and on that particular evening he seemed especially excited. A storm was brewing in the sky, which was heavy and black after a day of frightful heat. No breath of air stirred the leaves. A breeze like the breath of a furnace was passing over our faces and making us gasp. I felt ill at ease, excited, and I wished to go to bed.

When he saw me rising to leave, Jacques Parent seized my arm with a wild gesture, exclaiming: "Oh! no, stay a little longer!"

I looked at him with surprise, murmuring: "You see, the storm has unsettled my nerves!"

He moaned, or rather shrieked: "And how about me? Oh! please stay! I can't remain here alone!"

He looked wild. I exclaimed: "What is the matter with you? Are you mad?" And he muttered: "Yes, at times, on evenings like this, when electricity is in the air—I—I—I am afraid—I am afraid of myself—do you understand? I am gifted with a—a—a power—I don't know exactly what to call

it or what it is, but I have within me such magnetic and extraordinary action that I am afraid—yes, at times I am afraid of myself, as I remarked a while ago!"

Shaking wildly, he hid his trembling hands under his jacket. And I suddenly felt myself also shivering with a strange, powerful, vague fear. I felt like leaving, like running away, never to see him again, never to let his shifty eye pass over me, and then wander around the room and look for some dark corner to fix itself on, as if he also wished to hide his maddening glance. I stammered: "You never told me that!"

He continued: "Do I ever mention it to anybody? But this evening I *must* talk. And you might as well know everything; perhaps you could assist me.

"Magnetism! Do you know what it is? No. Nobody knows, but it exists, nevertheless. It is recognized; physicians themselves practise it; one of the most illustrious, Monsieur Charcot, makes use of it; therefore there is no doubt. It exists.

"A man, a being has the frightful and incomprehensible power of putting another being to sleep with his will, and, while he is asleep, of robbing him of his thoughts, just as one would rob a purse. He robs his thoughts, that is to say, his soul, his sanctuary, the secret of the Ego, that impenetrable secret of man, that fountain of ideas. He can rob him of everything which he hides, of everything which he loves; he opens this sanctuary, violates it, spreads it out and throws it to the public! Is this not atrocious, criminal, infamous?

"Why, how does this happen? Who knows?

"All is mystery. We can only interpret these

things with our poor, incomplete, crippled senses, which are so feeble that they scarcely have the power of realizing what surrounds us. Everything is mystery. Think of music, the divine art which upsets, carries away, intoxicates, maddens the mind, what is it? Nothing.

"You do not understand me? Listen. Two bodies come together. The air vibrates. These vibrations are more or less numerous, more or less rapid, strong, according to the nature of the shock. In our ear we have a little piece of skin which receives these vibrations from the air and transmits them to the brain in the form of a sound. Imagine a glass of water changing into wine in your mouth. The ear-drum accomplishes this wonderful metamorphosis, this surprising miracle of changing motion into sound. There!

"Music, that complex and mysterious art, as precise as algebra and as vague as a dream, made up of mathematics and of wind, the whole art arises from this little piece of skin. If this little skin did not exist, sound would not either, since in itself it is nothing but a vibration. Could you imagine music without ears? No. Well! we are surrounded by things that we do not suspect, because the organs are lacking that would reveal them to you.

"Perhaps magnetism is one of these. We can just barely perceive this power, tremble at this proximity of spirits, notice this new secret of nature, because we have not within us the revealing instrument.

"As for me—I am gifted with a frightful power. It is like another being shut up within me, who constantly wishes to escape, to do things against my commands, who worries me and wears me out. What

is it? I do not know; but there are two of us within my poor body, and it is often he, the other one, who is the stronger, just as this evening.

"I have only to look at people to put them to sleep, just as if I were to give them opium. I have only to stretch out my hand to do—terrible things. If you only knew! yes, if you only knew! My power is not limited to men alone, but it also extends over the animals, and even—over objects.

"This tortures and terrifies me. I often feel a mad desire to blind myself and to cut off my hands.

"But I want—I want you to know everything. Here! I will show it to you—not on a human being, that is done everywhere, but on—on—a beast. Call Mirza!"

He was walking around like a wild man; and he drew his hands from their hiding-place. They seemed frightful to me, like two naked swords.

I obeyed him mechanically, trembling with terror and devoured by an impetuous desire to see. I opened the door and whistled for my dog, which was sleeping in the vestibule. I immediately heard her running up the stairs, and she appeared, joyously wagging her tail. Then I ordered her to lie down on an armchair; she jumped up, and Jacques began to look at her and pet her.

At first she seemed nervous; she trembled, and turned her head in order to avoid the fixed stare of the man, seeming moved by a growing fear. Suddenly she began to shiver. Her whole body was shaking and she wished to escape. But he put his hand on the animal's head, and she immediately began to howl.

I myself felt numb, dizzy, just as one feels on a

boat. The furniture seemed to lean and the walls to move. I managed to exclaim: "Enough, Jacques, enough!" But he was no longer looking at me. He was watching Mirza in a fixed and frightful manner. Then she closed her eyes and let her head drop, just as she was accustomed to do when sleeping. He turned around to me, exclaiming: "It's all over now!"

He then threw his handkerchief to the other side of the room and called: "Fetch it!"

The beast arose, swaying, tripping, as if she were blind, moving her legs like a paralytic; then she went straight for the piece of cloth, which made a white spot against the wall. Several times she tried to get it in her mouth. But she would snatch at one side of it, as if she were blind. At last she seized it, and returned with the same swaying walk of a sleep-walking dog.

It was a terrifying thing to see. He ordered: "Lie down." She obeyed. Then he touched her head and said: "There is a hare, go after it!" And the beast, still on its side, tried to run, kicked about like a dog dreaming, and, without opening its mouth, barked strangely, like a ventriloquist.

Jacques seemed to have gone insane. Perspiration was rolling from his brow. He cried: "Bite your master! Bite him!" She seemed to have two or three terrible shocks. She looked as if she were resisting, struggling. He repeated: "Bite him!" Then, standing up, my dog came toward me, and I backed away toward the wall, shaking with fear, my foot ready to kick, to push her away. But Jacques ordered: "Come here, come immediately!" She returned to him. Then with his two large hands he began to rub her head as if he were freeing her

from invisible bonds. Mirza opened her eyes, and he said to her: "It's all over."

I did not dare touch her, and I pushed open the door so that she could get out. She left slowly, trembling, worn out, and I once more heard her descending the steps.

But Jacques returned to me, saying: "That's not all. What terrifies me most is this, look. Inanimate objects obey me."

On the table was a kind of stiletto, which was used as a paper-cutter. He stretched out his hand to it. He stretched it out slowly, with a gliding motion; suddenly I saw—yes, I saw the knife itself tremble, move, and then slide gently, all alone, over the table toward the motionless hand which was awaiting it, and it crept into his fingers! I cried out in terror. I thought that I was becoming insane myself, but the sharp sound of my voice suddenly calmed me.

Jacques continued: "All objects come to me like that. That is why I hide my hands. What is this? Magnetism, electricity? I don't know, but it's horrible. And can you understand why it's horrible? As soon as I am alone I cannot help attracting everything that is about me. I spend days at a time changing things about me, always trying this abominable power, as if to see whether it has not left me."

He had pushed his large hands into his pockets, and was looking out into the night. A gentle noise seemed to stir through the trees. It was beginning to rain.

I murmured: "It's frightful."

He repeated: "It's horrible!"

Something seemed to rush through the foliage

like a sudden gust of wind. It was the shower, a torrential downpour. Jacques began to take in great breaths of air, which filled his lungs; then he exclaimed: "Leave me now; the rain will quiet me. I wish to be alone."

THE WRECK

IT was yesterday, the 31st of December.

I had just finished breakfast with my old friend Georges Garin when the servant handed him in a letter covered with seals and foreign stamps.

Georges said:

"Will you excuse me?"

"Certainly."

And so he began to read the letter, which was written in a large English handwriting, crossed and re-crossed in every direction. He read them slowly, with serious attention and the interest which we only pay to things that touch our hearts.

Then he put the letter on the mantel-piece and said:

"That was a curious story! I've never told you about it, I think. Yet it was a sentimental adventure, and it really happened to me. That was a strange New Year's Day indeed! It must have been twenty years ago, since I was then thirty, and am now fifty years old.

"I was then an inspector in the Maritime Insurance Company, of which I am now director. I

had arranged to pass the *fête* of New Year's in Paris—since it is a convention to make that day a *fête*—when I received a letter from the manager, asking me to proceed at once to the island of Ré, where a three-masted vessel from Saint-Nazaire, insured by us, had just been driven ashore. It was then eight o'clock in the morning. I arrived at the office at ten, to get my advices, and that evening I took the express, which put me down in La Rochelle the next day, the thirty-first of December.

"I had two hours to wait before going aboard the boat for Ré. So I made a tour in the town. It is certainly a fantastic city, La Rochelle, with a strong character of its own—streets tangled like a labyrinth, sidewalks running under endless arcaded galleries like those of the Rue de Rivoli, but low, mysterious, built as if to form a fit scene for conspirators, and making an ancient and striking background for those old-time wars, the savage heroic wars of religion. It is indeed the typical old Huguenot city, conservative, discreet, with no fine art to show, with no wonderful monuments, such as make Rouen; but it is remarkable for its severe, somewhat cunning look; it is a city of obstinate fighters, a city where fanaticisms might well blossom, where the faith of the Calvinists became exalted, and which gave birth to the plot of the 'Four Sergeants.'

"After I had wandered for some time about these curious streets, I went aboard the black, rotund little steamboat which was to take me to the island of Ré. It was called the *Jean Guiton*. It started with angry puffings, passed between the two old towers which guard the harbor, crossed the roadstead, and issued from the mole built by Richelieu,

the great stones of which can be seen at the water's edge, enclosing the town like a great necklace. Then the steamboat turned to the right.

" It was one of those sad days which give one the blues, tighten the heart and kill in us all energy and force—a gray, cold day, with a heavy mist which was as wet as rain, as cold as frost, as bad to breathe as the mist of a wash-tub.

" Under this low ceiling of sinister fog, the shallow, yellow, sandy sea of all gradually receding coasts lay without a wrinkle, without a movement, without life, a sea of turbid water, of greasy water, of stagnant water. The *Jean Guiton* passed over it, rolling a little from habit, dividing the smooth, dark blue water, and leaving behind a few waves, a little chopping sea, a few big waves, which were soon calm.

" I began to talk to the captain, a little man with small feet, as round as his boat and balancing himself like it. I wanted some details about the disaster on which I was to give a report. A great square-rigged three-master, the *Marie Joseph,* of Saint-Nazaire, had gone ashore one night in a hurricane on the sands of the island of Ré.

" The owner wrote us that the storm had thrown the ship so far ashore that it was impossible to float her, and that they had to remove everything which could be detached, with the utmost possible haste. Nevertheless, I must examine the situation of the wreck, estimate what must have been her condition before the disaster, and decide whether all efforts had been used to get her afloat. I came as an agent of the company in order to give contradictory testimony, if necessary, at the trial.

" On receipt of my report, the manager would

take what measures he might think necessary to protect our interests.

" The captain of the *Jean Guiton* knew all about the affair, having been summoned with his boat to assist in the attempts at salvage.

" He told me the story of the disaster. The *Marie Joseph,* driven by a furious gale, lost her bearings completely, in the night, and steering by chance over a heavy foaming sea—' a milk-soup sea,' said the captain—had gone ashore on those immense banks of sand which make the coasts of this country seem like limitless Saharas at hours when the tide is low.

" While talking I looked around and ahead. Between the ocean and the lowering sky lay a free space where the eye could see far. We were following a coast. I asked:

" ' Is that the island of Ré? '

" ' Yes, sir.'

" And suddenly the captain stretched his right hand out before us, pointed to something almost invisible in the middle of the sea, and said:

" ' There's your ship! '

" ' The *Marie Joseph?* '

" ' Yes.'

" I was stupefied. This black, almost imperceptible speck, which looked to me like a rock, seemed at least three miles from land.

" I continued:

" ' But, captain, there must be a hundred fathoms of water in that place.'

" He began to laugh.

" ' A hundred fathoms, my child! Well, I should say about two! '

" He was from Bordeaux. He continued:

"'It's now nine-forty, just high tide. Go down along the beach with your hands in your pockets after you've had lunch at the Hôtel du Dauphin, and I'll wager that at ten minutes to three, or three o'clock, you'll reach the wreck without wetting your feet, and have from an hour and three-quarters to two hours aboard of her; but not more, or you'll be caught. The faster the sea goes out the faster it comes back. This coast is as flat as a turtle! But start away at ten minutes to five, as I tell you, and at half-past seven you will be aboard of the *Jean Guiton* again, which will put you down this same evening on the quay at La Rochelle.'

"I thanked the captain, and I went and sat down in the bow of the steamer to get a good look at the little city of Saint-Martin, which we were now rapidly drawing near.

"It was just like all small seaports which serve as the capitals of the barren islands scattered along the coast—a large fishing village, one foot on sea and one on shore, living on fish and wild-fowl, vegetables and shell-fish, radishes and mussels. The island is very low, and little cultivated, yet it seems to be thickly populated. However, I did not penetrate into the interior.

"After breakfast I climbed across a little promontory, and then, as the tide was rapidly falling, I started out across the sands towards a kind of black rock which I could just perceive above the surface of the water, out a considerable distance.

"I walked quickly over the yellow plain; it was elastic, like flesh, and seemed to sweat beneath my foot. The sea had been there very lately; now I perceived it at a distance, escaping out of sight, and I no longer could distinguish the line which separated

the sands from ocean. I felt as though I were assisting at a gigantic supernatural work of enchantment. The Atlantic had just now been before me, then it had disappeared into the strand, just as does scenery through a trap; and I now walked in the midst of a desert. Only the feeling, the breath of the salt-water, remained in me. I perceived the smell of the wreck, the smell of the wide sea, the good smell of sea-coasts. I walked fast; I was no longer cold; I looked at the stranded wreck, which grew in size as I approached, and came now to resemble an enormous shipwrecked whale.

"It seemed fairly to rise out of the ground, and on that great, flat, yellow stretch of sand assumed wonderful proportions. After an hour's walk I at last reached it. Bulging out and crushed, it lay upon its side, which, like the flanks of an animal, displayed its broken bones, its bones of tarry wood pierced with great bolts. The sand had already invaded it, entering it by all the crannies, and held it, and refused to let it go. It seemed to have taken root in it. The bow had entered deep into this soft, treacherous beach; while the stern, high in air, seemed to cast at heaven, like a cry of despairing appeal, the two white words on the black planking, *Marie Joseph.*

"I climbed upon this carcass of a ship by the lowest side; then, having reached the deck, I went below. The daylight, which entered by the stove-in hatches and the cracks in the sides, showed me a long somber cellar full of demolished woodwork. There was nothing here but the sand, which served as foot-soil in this cavern of planks.

"I began to take some notes about the condition of the ship. I was seated on a broken empty cask,

writing by the light of a great crack, through which I could perceive the boundless stretch of the strand. A strange shivering of cold and loneliness ran over my skin from time to time; and I would often stop writing for a moment to listen to the mysterious noises: the noise of the crabs scratching the planking with their crooked claws; the noise of a thousand little creatures of the sea already crawling over this dead body.

" Suddenly, very near me, I heard human voices; I started as though I had seen a ghost. For a second I really thought I was about to see drowned men rise from the sinister depths of the hold, who would tell me about their death. At any rate, it did not take me long to swing myself on deck. There, below the bow, I found standing a tall Englishman with three young girls. Certainly, they were a good deal more frightened at seeing this sudden apparition on the abandoned three-master than I had been at seeing them. The youngest girl turned round and ran; the two others caught their father by the arms; as for him, he opened his mouth—that was the only sign of his emotion which he showed.

" Then, after several seconds, he spoke:

" ' Môsieu, are you the owner of this ship? '

" ' I am.'

" ' May I go over it? '

" ' You may.'

" Then he uttered a long sentence in English, in which I only distinguished the word ' gracious,' repeated several times.

" As he was looking for a place to climb up, I showed him the best, and gave him a hand. He ascended. Then we helped up the three little girls, who had now quite recovered their composure.

They were charming, especially the oldest, a blonde of eighteen, fresh as a flower, and very dainty and pretty! Ah yes! the pretty Englishwomen have indeed the look of tender fruits of the sea. One would have said of this one that she had just risen from the sands and that her hair had kept their tint. They all, with their exquisite freshness, make you think of the delicate colors of pink sea-shells, and of shining pearls hidden in the unknown depths of the ocean.

"She spoke French a little better than her father, and she acted as interpreter. I must tell all about the shipwreck, and I romanced as though I had been present at the catastrophe. Then the whole family descended into the interior of the wreck. As soon as they had penetrated into this somber, dim-lit gallery, they uttered cries of astonishment and admiration. Suddenly the father and his three daughters were holding sketch-books in their hands, which they had doubtless carried hidden somewhere in their heavy weather-proof clothes, and were all beginning at once to make pencil sketches of the melancholy and fantastic place.

"They had seated themselves side by side on a projecting beam, and the four sketch-books on the eight knees were being rapidly covered with little black lines which were intended to represent the half-opened hulk of the *Marie Joseph*.

"I continued to inspect the skeleton of the ship, and the oldest girl talked to me while she worked.

"They had none of the usual English arrogance; they were simple honest hearts of that class of constant travelers with which England covers the globe. The father was long and thin, with a red face framed in white whiskers, and looking like a living

sandwich, placed between two wedges of hair. The daughters, like little wading-birds in embryo, had long legs and were also thin—except the oldest. All three were pretty, especially the tallest.

" She had such a droll way of speaking, of laughing, of understanding and of not understanding, of raising her eyes to ask a question (eyes blue as the deep ocean), of stopping her drawing a moment to make a guess at what you meant, of returning once more to work, of saying ' yes ' or ' no '—that I could have listened and looked indefinitely.

" Suddenly she murmured:

" ' I hear a little movement on this boat.'

" I lent an ear; and I immediately distinguished a low, steady, curious sound. I rose and looked out of the crack, and I uttered a violent cry. The sea had come back; it had already surrounded us!

" We were on deck in an instant. It was too late. The water circled us about, and was running towards the coast with awful swiftness. No, it did not run, it raced, it grew longer, like a kind of great limitless blot. The water on the sands was barely a few centimeters deep; but the rising flood had gone so far that we no longer saw the flying line of its edge.

" The Englishman wanted to jump. I held him back. Flight was impossible because of the deep places which we had been obliged to go round on our way out, and through which we could not pass on our return.

" There was a minute of horrible anguish in our hearts. Then the little English girl began to smile, and murmured:

" ' So we too are shipwrecked.'

" I tried to laugh; but fear caught me tight, a

fear which was cowardly and horrid and base and mean, like the tide. All the dangers which we ran appeared to me at once. I wanted to shriek ' Help! ' But to whom?

" The two younger girls were clinging to their father, who regarded, with a look of consternation, the measureless sea which hedged us round about.

" The night fell as swiftly as the ocean rose—a lowering, wet, icy night.

" I said:

" ' There's nothing to do but to stay on the ship.'

" The Englishman answered:

" ' Oh, yes! '

" And we waited there a quarter of an hour, half an hour, indeed I don't know how long, watching that creeping water which grew deep about us, whirled round and round the wreck.

" One of the little girls was cold, and we went below to shelter ourselves from the light but freezing wind which blew upon us and pricked our skins.

" I leaned over the hatchway. The ship was full of water. So we must cower against the stern planking, which shielded us a little.

" The shades were now enwrapping us, and we remained pressed close to one another. I felt trembling against my shoulder the shoulder of the little English girl, whose teeth chattered from time to time. But I also felt the gentle warmth of her body through her ulster, and that warmth was as delicious to me as a kiss. We no longer spoke; we sat motionless, mute, cowering down like animals in a ditch when a hurricane is raging. And, nevertheless, despite the night, despite the terrible and increasing danger, I began to feel happy that I was

there, glad of the cold and the peril, to rejoice in the long hours of darkness and anguish which I must pass on this plank so near this dainty and pretty little girl.

"I asked myself, 'Why this strange sensation of well-being and of joy?'

"Why! Does one know? Because she was there? Who? She, a little unknown English girl? I did not love her, I did not even know her. And for all that I was touched and conquered. I wanted to save her, to sacrifice myself for her, to commit a thousand follies! Strange thing! How does it happen that the presence of a woman overwhelms us so? Is it the power of her grace which infolds us? Is it the seduction in her beauty and youth, which intoxicates one like wine?

"Is it not rather the touch of Love, of Love the Mysterious, who seeks constantly to unite two beings, who tries his strength the instant he has put a man and a woman face to face.

"The silence of the shades and of the sky became dreadful, because we could thus hear vaguely about us an infinite low roar, the dull sound of the rising sea, and the monotonous dashing of the waves against the ship.

"Suddenly I heard the sound of sobs. The youngest of the little girls was crying. Her father tried to console her, and they began to talk in their own tongue, which I did not understand. I guessed that he was reassuring her, and that she was still afraid.

"I asked my neighbor:

"'You are not too cold, are you, Mademoiselle?'

"'Oh, yes. I am very cold.'

"I offered to give her my cloak; she refused it.

But I had taken it off, and I covered her with it against her will. In the short struggle her hand touched mine. It made a charming shiver run over my body.

" For some minutes the air had been growing brisker, the dashing of the water stronger against the flanks of the ship. I raised myself; a great gust of wind blew in my face. The wind was rising!

" The Englishman perceived this at the same time that I did, and said, simply:

" This is bad for us, this——'

" Of course it was bad, it was certain death if any breakers, however feeble, should attack and shake the wreck, which was already so loose and broken that the first big sea would carry it off.

" So our anguish increased momentarily as the squalls grew stronger and stronger. Now the sea broke a little, and I saw in the darkness white lines appearing and disappearing, which were lines of foam; while each wave struck the *Marie Joseph,* and shook her with a short quiver which rose to our hearts.

" The English girl was trembling; I felt her shiver against me. And I had a wild desire to take her in my arms.

" Down there before and behind us, to left and right, light-houses were shining along the shore—light-houses white and yellow and red, revolving like the enormous eyes of giants who were staring at us, watching us, waiting eagerly for us to disappear. One of them in especial irritated me. It went out every thirty seconds and it lit up again as soon. It was indeed an eye, that one, with its lid ceaselessly lowered over its fiery look.

" From time to time the Englishman struck a

match to see the hour; then he put his watch back in his pocket. Suddenly he said to me, over the heads of his daughters, with a gravity which was awful:

"'I wish you a Happy New Year, Môsieu.'

"It was midnight. I held out my hand, which he pressed. Then he said something in English, and suddenly he and his daughters began to sing 'God save the Queen,' which rose through the black and silent air and vanished into space.

"At first I felt a desire to laugh; then I was seized by a strong, fantastic emotion.

"It was something sinister and superb, this chant of the shipwrecked, the condemned, something like a prayer, and also like something grander, something comparable to the ancient '*Ave Cæsar morituri te salutamus.*'

"When they had finished I asked my neighbor to sing a ballad alone, anything she liked, to make us forget our terrors. She consented, and immediately her clear young voice rang out into the night. She sang something which was doubtless sad, because the notes were long drawn out, and hovered, like wounded birds, above the waves.

"The sea was rising now and beating upon our wreck. As for me, I thought only of that voice. And I thought also of the sirens. If a ship had passed near by us what would the sailors have said? My troubled spirit lost itself in the dream! A siren! Was she not really a siren, this daughter of the sea, who had kept me on this worm-eaten ship, and who was soon about to go down with me deep into the waters?

"But suddenly we were all five rolling on the deck, because the *Marie Joseph* had sunk on her

right side. The English girl had fallen upon me, and before I knew what I was doing, thinking that my last moment was come, I had caught her in my arms and kissed her cheek, her temple, and her hair.

"The ship did not move again, and we, we also, remained motionless.

"The father said, 'Kate!' The one whom I was holding answered, 'Yes,' and made a movement to free herself. And at that moment I should have wished the ship to split in two and let me fall with her into the sea.

"The Englishman continued:

"'A little rocking; it's nothing. I have my three daughters safe.'

"Not having seen the oldest, he had thought she was lost overboard!

"I rose slowly, and suddenly I made out a light on the sea quite near us. I shouted; they answered. It was a boat sent out in search of us by the hotel-keeper, who had guessed at our imprudence.

"We were saved. I was in despair. They picked us up off our raft, and they brought us back to Saint-Martin.

"The Englishman began to rub his hand and murmur:

"'A good supper! A good supper!'

"We did sup. I was not gay. I regretted the *Marie Joseph*.

"We had to separate the next day after much handshaking and many promises to write. They departed for Biarritz. I wanted to follow them.

"I was hard hit; I wanted to ask this little girl to marry me. If we had passed eight days together, I should have done so! How weak and incomprehensible a man sometimes is!

" Two years passed without my hearing a word from them. Then I received a letter from New York. She was married, and wrote to tell me. And since then we write to each other every year, on New Year's Day. She tells me about her life, talks of her children, her sisters, never of her husband! Why? Ah! why? . . . And as for me I only talk of the *Marie Joseph*. That was perhaps the only woman I have ever loved. No—that I ever should have loved. . . . Ah, well! who can tell? Facts master you. . . . And then—and then—all passes. . . . She must be old now; I should not know her. . . . Ah! she of the by-gone time, she of the wreck! What a creature! . . . Divine! She writes me her hair is white. . . . That caused me terrible pain. . . . Ah! her yellow hair. . . . No, *my* English girl exists no longer. . . . They are sad, such things as that!

ON THE JOURNEY

AFTER leaving Cannes the carriage was full; as all were acquainted, we conversed together. As we passed Tarascon some one said, "It is here the murders happen." And we began to talk of that mysterious assassin who has never been caught, and who from time to time during the last two years has offered up to himself some traveler's life. Every one hazarded suppositions, every one gave his ideas; the women looked with fear at the somber night behind the panes, fearing to see the head of a man show suddenly in the doorway. We began to tell awful stories of terrible adventures, of some *tête-à-tête* with a madman in an express, of hours passed opposite suspicious-looking persons, quite alone.

All the men had intimidated, knocked down, and choked some malefactor in surprising circumstances, and with admirable boldness and presence of mind. A physician, who passed each winter in the South, wished in his turn to tell a tale.

"I," said he, "never have had the chance to try my courage in an affair of that sort; but I knew a woman, one of my patients, who is now dead, to whom there happened the strangest thing in the world, and also the most weird and the most affecting.

"She was a Russian, the Comtesse Marie Baranow, a very great lady of exquisite beauty. We all know how beautiful the Russian women are, or at least how beautiful they seem to us, with their thin nostrils, with their delicate mouths, with their eyes of a hazel color—a sort of blue-gray, set close together—and with that grace of theirs which is cold and a little hard. They have about them something naughty and seductive, something haughty and gentle, something tender and severe, which is very alluring to a Frenchman. It is perhaps, however, only the difference of race and type which makes me see so much.

"For several years her doctor had noticed that she was threatened with lung trouble, and had been trying to induce her to go to the south of France; but she obstinately refused to leave St. Petersburg. Finally, last autumn, the physician gave her up as lost, and so informed her husband, who at once ordered his wife to leave for Mentone.

"She took the train, alone in her carriage, her servants occupying another compartment. She leaned against the doorway, a little sad, looking at

the country and the passing villages, feeling herself in life so lonely, so abandoned, without children, almost without relatives, with a husband whose love was dead, and who, not coming with her, had just thrown her off to the end of the world as he would send to the hospital a valet who was sick.

"At every station her body-servant Ivan came to ask if anything was wanted by his mistress. He was an old servant, blindly devoted, ready to carry out any order which she might give.

" The night fell, the train rolled onward at full speed. She was much unstrung, she could not sleep. Suddenly she began counting the money which her husband had given her at the last moment. She opened her little bag, and emptied the shining pieces of gold upon her knees.

" But all of a sudden a breath of cold air struck her in the face. She raised her head in surprise. The door had just swung open. The Countess Marie, in desperation, bruskly threw a shawl over the money which was spread upon her knees, and waited. Some seconds passed, then a man appeared, bareheaded, wounded in the hand, panting, in evening dress. He shut the door again, sat down, stared at his neighbor with glittering eyes, then wrapped a handkerchief round his wrist, from which the blood was flowing.

" The young Countess felt herself grow weak with fright. This man had certainly seen her counting her gold, and he was come to murder and to rob.

" He kept staring at her, breathless, his face convulsed, ready, no doubt, to make a spring.

" He said, suddenly:

" ' Have no fear, Madame! '

" She answered nothing. She was unable to

open her mouth, hearing her heart beat and her ears hum.

" He continued:

" ' I am not a criminal, Madame.'

" She still said nothing, but, in a brusk movement which she made, her knees came close together, and her gold began to flow down upon the carpet as water flows from a gutter.

" The man, surprised, looked at this rivulet of metal, and suddenly he stooped to pick up the money.

" She rose in a mad fright, casting all her treasure to the ground, and she ran to the door to throw herself out upon the track. But he understood what she was about to do, rushed forward, caught her in his arms, made her sit down by force, and holding her wrists: " Listen, Madame, I am not a criminal, and the proof is that I am going to pick up this money and give it back to you. I am a lost man, a dead man, unless you help me to cross the frontier. I cannot tell you more. In one hour we shall be at the last Russian station; in one hour and twenty minutes we shall pass the boundary of the empire. If you do not rescue me I am lost. And yet, Madame, I have neither killed nor stolen, nor done anything against my honor. I swear it to you. I cannot tell you more.'

" And getting down on his knees, he picked up the gold, looking even for the last pieces, which had rolled under the seats. Then, when the little leather bag was once more full, he returned it to her without adding a word, and sat in the other corner of the carriage.

" They no longer stirred, either one or the other. She remained motionless and dumb, still fainting

with terror, then little by little growing more at ease. As for him, he did not make a movement; he sat straight, his eyes fixed before him, very pale, as though he had been dead. From time to time she looked at him suddenly, and as quickly looked away. He was a man about thirty, very handsome, with every appearance of a gentleman.

" The train ran through the darkness, cast rending cries across the night, sometimes slackened its pace, then went off again at full speed. But suddenly it slowed, whistled several times, and stopped.

" Ivan appeared at the door to get his orders.

" The Countess Marie, with a trembling voice, considered her strange companion for the last time, then said to her servant, with a brusk voice:

" ' Ivan, you are to return to the Count; I have no more need of you.'

" The man, speechless, opened his enormous eyes. He stammered:

" ' But—Barine! '

" She added:

" ' No, you are not to come; I have changed my mind. I want you to remain in Russia. Here is money to return. Give me your cap and your cloak.'

" The old servant, quite overcome, bared his head and held out his cloak. He always obeyed without reply, being well accustomed to the sudden wishes and the irresistible caprices of his masters. And he withdrew, the tears in his eyes.

" The train went on, running towards the frontier.

" Then the Countess Marie said to her neighbor:

" ' These things are for you, Monsieur; you are Ivan, my servant. I add only one condition to what I do: it is that you shall never speak to me, that you

must not address me, either to thank me or for any purpose whatever.'

" The unknown bowed without uttering a word.

" Very soon they came to a stop once more, and officials in uniform visited the train. The Countess offered them her papers, and pointing to the man seated at the back of the carriage:

" ' My servant, Ivan. Here is his passport.'

" The train went on.

During the whole night they remained in *tête-à-tête,* both silent.

" In the morning, when they stopped at a German station, the unknown got down; then, standing straight in the door-way:

" ' Forgive my breaking my promise, Madame; but I have deprived you of your servant, it is right that I should fill his place. Have you need of anything? '

" She answered coldly:

" ' Go and find my maid.'

" He went to do so, then disappeared.

" When she got out of the carriage at a restaurant, she perceived him from a distance looking at her. They reached Mentone."

The doctor was silent a second, then resumed:

" One day, as I was receiving my patients in my office, I saw enter a tall young fellow, who said to me:

" ' Doctor, I am here to ask news of the Comtesse Marie Baranow. I am, although she does not know me, a friend of her husband.'

" I replied:

" ' She is doomed. She will never go back to Russia.'

" The man suddenly began to sob, then he got up and went out, reeling like a drunkard.

" That night I told the Countess that a stranger had come to inquire from me about her health. She seemed moved, and told me all the story which I have just told you. She added:

" ' That man, whom I do not know at all, now shadows me, I meet him every time I go out; he looks at me in a strange fashion, but he has never spoken.'

" She paused, then continued:

" ' See, I would wager he is under my windows.'

" She left her easy-chair, went to pull back the curtains, and, sure enough, she pointed out the man who had called to see me, now seated there on a bench upon the promenade, his eyes raised towards the hotel. He recognized us, rose, and went off without once turning his head.

" From that time forward I assisted at an unusual and sorrowful thing—at the silent love of these two beings, who did not even know one another.

" He loved her with the affection of an animal who has been saved, and who is grateful and devoted unto death. He came each day to say to me: ' How is she? ' understanding that I had divined the secret. And he cried when he had seen her pass each day feebler and paler.

" She said to me:

" ' I have spoken but a single time to that strange man, and it seems to me as if I had known him for twenty years.'

" When they met, she would return his bow with a grave and charming smile. I could see that she was happy—she, the forsaken, the doomed—I could

see that she was happy to be loved like this, with such respect and such constancy, in such a sentimental manner, with this devotion which was ready for all things. And notwithstanding, faithful to her mystical resolve, she wildly refused to receive him, to know his name, to speak with him. She said: 'No, no, that would spoil for me this curious friendship. We must remain strangers one to the other.'

"As for him, he also was certainly a kind of Don Quixote, because he made no attempt to approach her. He meant to keep the absurd promise of never speaking, which he had made her in the railway carriage.

"Often, during her weary hours of weakness, she rose from her long chair, and went to open the curtains a little way to see if he was there, beneath her window. When she had seen him, always motionless upon his bench, she went back and lay down with a smile upon her lips.

"She died one day about ten o'clock. As I was leaving the hotel he came up to me with a distracted face; he had already heard the news.

"'I should like to see her, for one second, in your presence,' said he.

"I took him by the arm and went back into the house.

"When he was before the couch of the dead he seized her hand and kissed it with an endless kiss, then escaped like a madman."

The doctor again was silent; then continued:

"This is certainly the strangest railway adventure that I know. It must also be said that men take sometimes the wildest freaks."

A woman murmured, half aloud:

"Those two people were not so crazy as you think. They were—they were——"

But she could not speak further, she was crying so. As we changed the conversation to calm her, we never knew what she had wished to say.

MADAME SAUVAGE

FIFTEEN years had passed since I was at Virelogne. I returned there in the autumn, to shoot with my friend Serval, who had at last rebuilt his château, which the Prussians had destroyed.

I loved that district very much. It is one of those parts of the world which have a sensuous charm for the eyes. You love it with a bodily love. We, whom the country seduces, we keep tender memories for certain springs, for certain woods, for certain pools, for certain hills, seen very often, and which have stirred us like joyful events. Sometimes our thoughts turn back towards a corner in a forest, or the end of a bank, or an orchard filled with flowers, seen but a single time, one some gray day; yet remaining in our hearts like the images of certain women met in the street on a spring morning, with bright transparent dresses; and leaving in soul and body an unsatisfied desire which is not to be forgotten, a feeling that you have just encountered happiness.

At Virelogne I loved the whole country-side, dotted with little woods, and crossed by brooks which

sparkled in the sun and looked like veins, carrying blood to the earth. You fished in them for crawfish, trout, and eels! divine happiness! You could bathe in places, and you often found snipe among the high grass which grew along the borders of these slender watercourses.

I was walking, lightly as a goat, watching my two dogs ranging before me. Serval, a hundred meters to my right, was beating a field of lucern. I turned the thicket which forms the boundary of the wood of Sandres, and I saw a cottage in ruins.

Suddenly I remembered it as I had seen it the last time, in 1869, neat, covered with vines, with chickens before the door. What is sadder than a dead house, with its skeleton standing upright, bare and sinister?

I also recalled that in it, one very tiring day, the good woman had given me a glass of wine to drink, and that Serval had then told me the history of its people. The father, an old poacher, had been killed by the gendarmes. The son, whom I had once seen, was a tall, dry fellow who also passed for a ferocious destroyer of game. People called them "*les sauvages.*"

Was that a name or a nickname?

I called to Serval. He came up with his long strides like a crane.

I asked him:

"What's become of those people?"

This was his story:

When war was declared, the son Sauvage, who was then thirty-three years old, enlisted, leaving his mother alone in the house. People did not pity the old woman very much because she had money; they knew it.

She remained entirely alone in that isolated dwelling so far from the village, on the edge of the wood. She was not afraid, however, being of the same strain as her menfolk; a hardy old woman, tall and thin, who laughed seldom, and with whom one never jested. The woman of the fields laugh but little in any case; that is men's business! But they themselves have sad and narrowed hearts, leading a melancholy, gloomy life. The peasants imbibe a little noisy merriment at the tavern, but their helpmates have grave and severe countenances always. The muscles of their faces have never learned the movements of the laugh.

La Mère Sauvage continued her ordinary existence in her cottage, which was soon covered by the snows. She came to the village once a week, to get bread and a little meat; then she returned into her house. As there was talk of wolves, she went out with a gun upon her shoulder—her son's gun, rusty, and with the butt worn by the rubbing of the hand; and she was strange to see, the tall "Sauvage," a little bent, going with slow strides over the snow, the muzzle of the piece extending beyond the black headdress, which pressed close to her head and imprisoned her white hair, which no one had ever seen.

One day a Prussian force arrived. It was billeted upon the inhabitants, according to the property and resources of each. Four were allotted to the old woman, who was known to be rich.

They were four great boys of fair complexion, with blond beards and blue eyes, who had remained stout notwithstanding the fatigues which they had endured already, and who also, though in a conquered country, had remained kind and gentle. Alone with this aged woman, they showed themselves full

of consideration, sparing her, as much as they could, all expenses and fatigue. They could be seen in a morning, all four of them, making their toilet round the well, in their shirt-sleeves, splashing with great swishes of water, under the crude daylight of the snowy weather, their pink-white Northman's flesh, while La Mère Sauvage went and came, preparing the soup. Then they would be seen cleaning the kitchen, rubbing the tiles, splitting wood, peeling potatoes, doing up all the house-work, like four good sons about their mother.

But the old woman thought always of her own, so tall and thin, with his hooked nose and his brown eyes and his heavy mustache which made a roll of black hairs upon his lip. She asked every day of each of the soldiers who were installed beside her hearth:

"Do you know where the French marching regiment Number 23 was sent? My boy is in it."

They invariably answered, "No, we don't know —don't know a thing at all." And, understanding her pain and her uneasiness (they, who had mothers too, there at home), they rendered her a thousand little services. She loved them well, moreover, her four enemies, since the peasantry feels no patriotic hatred; that belongs to the upper class alone. The humble, those who pay the most, because they are poor, and because every new burden crushes them down; those who are killed in masses, who make the true cannon's-prey, because they are so many; those, in fine, who suffer most cruelly the atrocious miseries of war, because they are the feeblest, and offer least resistance—they hardly understand at all those bellicose ardors, that excitable sense of honor, or those pretended political combinations which in six

months exhaust two nations, the conqueror with the conquered.

They said on the country-side, in speaking of the Germans of La Mère Sauvage:

"There are four who have found a soft place."

Now, one morning, when the old woman was alone in the house, she observed far off on the plain a man coming towards her dwelling. Soon she recognized him; it was the postman to distribute the letters. He gave her a folded paper, and she drew out of her case the spectacles which she used for sewing; then she read:

MADAME SAUVAGE:—The present letter is to tell you sad news. Your boy Victor was killed yesterday by a shell which near cut him in two. I was near by, as we stood next each other in the company, and he told me about you and to let you know on the same day if anything happened to him.

I took his watch, which was in his pocket, to bring it back to you when the war is done.

I salute you very friendly.

CÉSAIRE RIVOT,
Soldier of the 2d class, March. Reg. No. 23.

The letter was dated three weeks before.

She did not cry at all. She remained motionless, so overcome and stupefied that she did not even suffer as yet. She thought: "There's Victor who is killed now." Then little by little the tears came to her eyes, and the sorrow caught her heart. The ideas came to her, one by one, dreadful, torturing. She would never kiss him again, her child, her big boy, never again! The gendarmes had killed the father, the Prussians had killed the son. He had been cut in two by a cannon-ball. She seemed to see the thing, the horrible thing: the head falling, the eyes open, while he chewed the corner of his big mustache as he always did in moments of anger.

What had they done with his body afterwards? If they had only let her have her boy back as they had brought back her husband—with the bullet in the middle of his forehead!

But she heard a noise of voices. It was the Prussians returning from the village. She hid her letter very quickly in her pocket, and she received them quietly, with her ordinary face, having had time to wipe her eyes.

They were laughing, all four, delighted, since they brought with them a fine rabbit—stolen, doubtless—and they made signs to the old woman that there was to be something good to eat.

She set herself to work at once to prepare breakfast; but when it came to killing the rabbit, her heart failed her. And yet it was not the first. One of the soldiers struck it down with a blow of his fist behind the ears.

The beast once dead, she cut the red body from the skin; but the sight of the blood that she was touching, which covered her hands, and which she felt cooling and coagulating, made her tremble from head to foot; and she kept seeing her big boy cut in two, bloody, like this still palpitating animal.

She set herself at table with the Prussians, but she could not eat, not even a mouthful. They devoured the rabbit without bothering themselves about her. She looked at them askance, without speaking, her face so impassible that they perceived nothing.

All of a sudden, she said: "I don't even know your names, and here's a whole month that we've been together." They understood, not without difficulty, what she wanted, and told their names. That was not sufficient; she had them written for her on

a paper, with the addresses of their families, and, resting her spectacles on her great nose, she considered that strange handwriting, then folded the sheet and put it in her pocket, on top of the letter which told her of the death of her son.

When the meal was ended, she said to the men:

"I am going to work for you."

And she began to carry up hay into the loft where they slept.

They were astonished at her taking all this trouble; she explained to them that thus they would not be so cold; and they helped her. They heaped the stacks of hay as high as the straw roof; and in that manner they made a sort of great chamber with four walls of fodder, warm and perfumed, where they should sleep splendidly.

At dinner, one of them was worried to see that La Mère Sauvage still ate nothing. She told him that she had pains in the stomach. Then she kindled a good fire to warm herself, and the four Germans ascended to their lodging-place by the ladder which served them every night for this purpose.

As soon as they closed the trapdoor, the old woman removed the ladder, then opened the outside door noiselessly, and went back to look for more bundles of straw, with which she filled her kitchen. She went barefoot in the snow, so softly that no sound was heard. From time to time she listened to the sonorous and unequal snorings of the four soldiers who were fast asleep.

When she judged her preparatioins to be sufficient, she threw one of the bundles into the fireplace, and when it was alight she scattered it over all the others. Then she went outside again and looked.

In a few seconds the whole interior of the cottage was illumined with a violent brightness and became a dreadful brazier, a gigantic fiery furnace, whose brilliance spouted out of the narrow window and threw a glittering beam upon the snow.

Then a great cry issued from the summit of the house; it was a clamor of human shriekings, heart-rending calls of anguish and of fear. Finally, the trap having fallen in, a whirlwind of fire shot up into the loft, pierced the straw roof, rose to the sky like the immense flame of a torch; and all the cottage flared.

Nothing more was heard therein but the crackling of the fire, the crackling sound of the walls, the falling of the rafters. Suddenly the roof fell in, and the burning carcass of the dwelling hurled a great plume of sparks into the air, amid a cloud of smoke.

The country, all white, lit up by the fire, shone like a cloth of silver tinted with red.

A bell, far off, began to toll.

The old "Sauvage" stood before her ruined dwelling, armed with her gun, her son's gun, for fear lest one of those men might escape.

When she saw that it was ended, she threw her weapon into the brazier. A loud report rang back.

People were coming, the peasants, the Prussians.

They found the woman seated on the trunk of a tree, calm and satisfied.

A German officer, but speaking French like a son of France, demanded:

"Where are your soldiers?"

She reached her bony arm towards the red heap of fire which was almost out, and answered with a strong voice:

"There!"

They crowded round her. The Prussian asked:

"How did it take fire?"

"It was I who set it on fire."

They did not believe her, they thought that the sudden disaster had made her crazy. While all pressed round and listened, she told the story from one end to the other, from the arrival of the letter to the last cry of the men who were burned with her house and never omitted a detail.

When she had finished, she drew two pieces of paper from her pocket, and, to distinguish them by the last glimmers of the fire, she again adjusted her spectacles; then she said, showing one: "That, that is the death of Victor." Showing the other, she added, indicating the red ruins with a bend of the head: "Here are their names, so that you can write home." She quietly held a sheet of paper out to the officer, who held her by the shoulders, and she continued:

"You must write how it happened, and you must say to their mothers that it was I who did that, Victoire Simon, la Sauvage! Do not forget."

The officer shouted some orders in German. They seized her, they threw her against the walls of her house, still hot. Then twelve men drew quickly up before her, at twenty paces. She did not move. She had understood; she waited.

An order rang out, followed instantly by a long report. A belated shot went off by itself, after the others.

The old woman did not fall. She sank as though they had cut off her legs.

The Prussian officer approached. She was almost cut in two, and in her withered hand she held her letter bathed with blood.

My friend Serval added:

"It was by way of reprisal that the Germans destroyed the château of the district, which belonged to me."

I thought of the mothers of those four fine fellows burned in that house and of the horrible heroism of that other mother shot against the wall.

And I picked up a little stone, still blackened by the flames.